



April 8, 2021

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Akashdeep Singh and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon. It is my honor and pleasure to write in broad support of HB 2021 and in particular the -5 and -9 amendments.

As a community organizer and advocate, my work is centered around improving the lives of marginalized voices who are often spoken about but rarely with. Communities of color, low-income communities, rural and coastal communities, Indigenous communities. Our policymaking is richer and more effective when it takes our voices into account rather than treating them as an afterthought, if we're remembered at all.

Our communities are suffering. The wildfires. The burnt orange plumes of smoke and pollution. The disparate impact in a pandemic from the virus itself to vaccination and public and economic health. The horrific rise in hate crimes. The difficulty in paying our utility bills when we are forced to spend more of our time indoors. Receiving environmental, social, and economic benefits from policymaking when we are so often saddled with just the burdens.

I urge you to support House Bill 2021 so that Oregon communities are sure to benefit from the transition to clean energy. House Bill 2021 will help us to ensure that the communities in Oregon that are struggling the most from the pandemic and its economic impacts, extreme weather events, and wildfires are the same communities that benefit from clean energy. That is why the Oregon legislature must take action.

In planning for our environmental future, communities like the ones I represent and work with are often excluded from the conversation and consideration. We bear a disproportionate brunt of the burden when it comes to environmental degradation such as air pollution, diesel pollution from heavy trucks and construction, and a lack of accessible and safe green spaces for our communities to breathe, play, and thrive in. We are disproportionately excluded from decision making processes affecting our daily lives. Our needs and priorities become afterthoughts.

HB 2021 and the -5 and -9 amendments in particular help create a future where our communities actively take part in and benefit from clean energy projects. They create incentives and structures that can fundamentally reimagine our community's relationship to clean energy by ensuring project longevity and community ownership. A clean energy future

that includes local community structures can have immense public health benefits by mitigating the disproportionate public health consequences from our dependence on fossil fuels. We can help our communities transition to a clean energy economy with economic opportunities and savings so that they can actively build and partake in an equitable and sustainable future for future generations.

We can build a strong, resilient, and clean energy economy in our communities by ensuring that Oregon's 100% Clean Energy Standard includes:

- Strong labor standards that ensure clean energy projects hire local, pay the prevailing wage and provide good benefits, and reserve opportunities for apprenticeships.
- Good incentives for community-based energy projects such as solar plus storage that increase energy independence, affordability, and disaster-resilience.
- Provisions that prioritize benefits and avoid harms to environmental justice communities including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), low-income communities, Tribes, and rural and coastal communities.

We have the opportunity to increase local community ownership of energy, job opportunities and economic development, and the health and safety of communities throughout the state. Globally, the burning of fossil fuels was responsible for 20% of deaths in 2018 and pollution from facilities like gas-fired power plants leads to worse outcomes of COVID-19. By setting clear targets for cleaning up Oregon's electricity and supporting community-based energy projects and good jobs for local communities, we can seize the opportunity of clean energy to help rebuild from today's many crises.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2021. Please support a strong 100% Clean Energy Standard with good jobs and community-based energy projects for Oregonians.

Sincerely,

*Akashdeep Singh*

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