



April 23, 2021

To: Senator Lee Beyer, Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
Senator Lynn Findley, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
Members, Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
From: Diane Brandt, Oregon Policy Manager, Renewable Northwest  
**Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2475 as Amended**

Dear Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee;

Renewable Northwest is a regional, non-profit renewable energy advocacy organization based in Oregon, dedicated to decarbonizing the region by accelerating the transition to renewable electricity in a responsible and just manner. Our members are a combination of renewable energy businesses and environmental and consumer groups. **Renewable Northwest supports HB 2475A, which would facilitate broader stakeholder engagement in the utility regulatory process and assist in a just transition to an electricity system capable of achieving Oregon's climate and carbon goals.**

As mentioned in prior Renewable Northwest testimony to the House Committee on Energy and Environment on February 1, 2021, HB 2475 would amend ORS 757.072 by adding "organizations that represent ... the interests of low-income residential customers; or ... residential customers that are members of environmental justice communities" to the organizations eligible for financial assistance from utilities to support engagement in regulatory proceedings. The current statute provides financial assistance for groups such as the Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon (CUB) and the Alliance of Western Energy Consumers (AWEC). Expanding the categories to include organizations representing low-income and environmental justice communities ensures that the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) can consider these groups' unique interests, which might not otherwise be captured.

HB 2475 also amends ORS 757.230 to allow the PUC to consider differential energy burdens on low-income customers and environmental justice communities in its approach to utility regulation and determining rates. Oregon Department of Energy's 2020 Biennial Energy Report estimated that 25% of Oregon households were energy burdened in 2019, and that problem has only been exacerbated with the ongoing difficulties related to the pandemic. Allowing the PUC

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to include energy burden in utility regulation decisions makes sense and offers another tool to ensure the fair allocation of costs and benefits of a transforming energy system.

Renewable Northwest supports these moves to encourage broader stakeholder engagement and consideration of energy burden in the regulatory process. This bill, along with HB 2021 that also proposes steps towards environmental justice and inclusion of stakeholders, represents an opportunity to facilitate and encourage broader stakeholder participation in public processes. This result is consistent with the recommendation in the PUC's September 2018 report *SB 978: Actively Adapting to the Changing Electricity Sector* to provide funding for broader stakeholder participation as well as Oregon's Environmental Task Force's January 2016 report *Environmental Justice: Best Practices for Oregon's Natural Resource Agencies* noting the importance of resources for impacted communities to have meaningful participation in the public process. HB 2475 is part of the answer to these recommendations.

The encouragement of broader stakeholder participation in public processes at the PUC is an essential piece of an equitable and just clean energy transition, supporting Oregon's carbon and climate goals and sending the signal that all Oregonians should have a voice in the process. For this reason and those stated above, Renewable Northwest supports HB 2475 as amended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Brandt", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Diane Brandt  
Oregon Policy Manager  
Renewable Northwest