

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Brock-Smith and Helm, members of the Committee:

**I advocate for passage of the Oregon Energy Affordability Act, HB 2475**

Personal income that goes toward energy bills is increasing as Oregonians spend more time at home and as sources of income decrease. Many, especially those with lower incomes, are falling behind on their bills and making tough budget decisions. They need relief. At the same time, utilities need tools to help manage mounting, past due bills.

The legislature must act to allow for flexible rate structures that relieve energy burden and protect all ratepayers, long term, from widespread cost increases. With passage of HB 2475, the State Public Utility Commission will be given authority to allow utilities to provide rate designs, such as discounts, that help reduce energy burden for low income or other underserved customers. The passage will also benefit organizations who represent the people most impacted by energy burden, and who will be able to access funding to participate in regulatory processes in the same manner as other broad customer groups like the Citizens' Utility Board.

For too long these communities have been disenfranchised; the bill clearly defines who they are: "Environmental justice communities includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, tribal communities, rural communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including but not limited to seniors, youth and persons with disabilities."

Justice demands equity, not equality in paying utility costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2475.

Emily Herbert  
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