



To: House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Date: 3/2/2023

**RE: SUPPORT of HB 3152 - 1, Utility Customer Protection Bill**

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy and Levy, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 3152. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, and the Oregon Conservation Network's strong support to pass HB 3152, the Utility Customer Protection Bill. HB 3152 is a bill of support in the OCN Hotlist of Bills for the 2023 Legislative Session.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV). OCN is a coalition of 42 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

**We at OCN and OLCV strongly support and urge you to vote yes on HB 3152 and the -1 amendment to protect residential gas utility customers.**

HB 3152 with the -1 amendment would do two important things: 1) empower the Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) to continue in its work to ensure utilities and the overall investor-owned utility system are on track to meet the state's climate goals and 2) end the practice of charging existing residential utility customers for incentivizing new gas lines (i.e., line extension allowances) and incentives for new gas appliances and devices (e.g., gas furnaces and fireplaces).

We felt compelled to submit testimony on this bill given the large number of opposition testimony submitted under the incorrect and misguided fear that this legislation will take away people's gas stoves and furnaces: something this bill doesn't do in any way. We urge you to stay grounded in the sound foundation this bill offers to help assure utility customers can be protected from high energy costs to heat and cool their homes.

**Importantly, this bill would neither change the fundamental mandate of the OPUC nor prevent anyone from choosing to build with gas or buy new gas appliances. This bill does not take away anyone's energy choice, but it does change who pays for it.** Oregonians will still have the choice to install gas furnaces, stoves, and fireplaces. Gas companies can still choose to incentivize gas line extensions and gas appliances. The companies would simply not be able to charge existing customers for these subsidies or incentives. At a baseline, HB 3152 with the proposed -1 amendment **helps to shift the financial risk** of subsidizing gas system expansion and incentivizing



new gas appliances to gas company shareholders, rather than their customers who will not see the benefits of those incentives. This would protect existing gas customers – who are captive customers without control over what is put into their bills and many of whom do not have the choice to leave the system – from the risk of stranded fossil fuel costs.

To end, HB 3152 with the -1 amendment would send a clear signal to Oregonians that the legislature is taking climate seriously, expects continued leadership from the OPUC on greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and wants to protect low-income and other vulnerable ratepayers from financial risks related to continued gas system expansion – all while maintaining flexibility and consistency for the OPUC in doing so.

**We urge you to vote yes on HB 3152 with the -1 amendment.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julia B. DeGraw".

Julia B. DeGraw  
Coalition Director

Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Audubon Society of Portland, Beyond Toxics, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Central Oregon LandWatch, Climate Solutions, Defenders of Wildlife, Deschutes River Alliance, Engineers for a Sustainable Future, The Environmental Center, Environment Oregon, Food & Water Watch, Friends of Mount Hood, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Friends of Family Farmers, Greater Hells Canyon Council, League of Women Voters of Oregon, Native Fish Society, Neighbors for Clean Air, Oceana, Oregon Coast Alliance, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Land and Water Alliance, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oregon Wild, Pew Charitable Trusts, Renewable Northwest, Rogue Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, The Street Trust, Surfrider Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Tualatin Riverkeepers, WaterWatch of Oregon, The Wetlands Conservancy, Wild Salmon Center, Zero Coalition