



Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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March 7, 2023

To: Co-Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Policy Manager, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)

Re: Support for HB 5016

The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB) is a statewide nonprofit consumer advocacy organization developed by citizens' initiative in 1984. CUB represents the interests of Oregon households by advocating for utility regulations and policies that protect your wallet. To date, we have saved Oregon ratepayers \$9.4 billion. **We ask that you vote "yes" on HB 5016 and support the Oregon Department of Energy's (ODOE) request for biennial funding so they may continue to provide programs and services that help lower Oregon household utility bills.**

HB 5016 supports ODOE's continued work toward a sustainable energy future in Oregon. This includes providing its technical expertise in energy systems as well as providing incentives to help Oregonians reduce their energy costs. Adequate funding and staff support is necessary to ensure ODOE can continue its current programming as well as develop and implement new incentive programs created by the Legislature.

In addition to state energy incentives, Oregon will soon have access to millions of federal dollars to help Oregonians access incentives for a more reliable and resilient electricity grid and energy cost savings, including for energy efficiency appliances. ODOE will play a key role in leveraging and administering these federal funds and incentives for Oregon. With matching funding support from the General Fund, Oregon can leverage federal funds to meet the energy security planning requirements of SB 1567 (2022), and ensure that Oregon has a reliable, secure, and resilient energy infrastructure. This planning should save Oregon households millions of dollars on costs that may otherwise be recovered in utility rates or paid by customers themselves.

Relatedly, ODOE's budget request includes funding to support its ability to connect with communities and make it easy for households to access federal funding incentives and energy savings programs. Oregon needs this community-level coordination and outreach to ensure Oregonians can take full advantage of the cost-savings opportunities – particularly for those federal funds specifically directed at helping low-income families.

In the past year, Oregonians have experienced significant utility rate increases for a variety of reasons including natural gas price volatility, the war in Ukraine, extreme weather events, and wildfire mitigation costs. And while Oregon's aggressive greenhouse gas reduction policies are economic overall, investments are necessary to support the energy transition away from fossil fuels. ODOE needs sufficient resources and capacity to continue to offer energy saving incentives and to maximize the economic benefit of unprecedented federal funding available for Oregon's energy future. Please vote "yes" on HB 5016 and help keep energy costs low for Oregonians. Thank you for your consideration.