

Rebuttal of Salem Chamber of Commerce
Philip H. Carver, Ph.D.
Representing 350 Salem OR
Before the House Climate, Energy and Environmental Committee
Hearing on HB 3152
March 13, 2023

Greetings Chair Marsh, Co-Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Phillip Carver. I live in Salem and I represent over 300 members of 350 Salem OR. I am the same Philip Carver who submitted testimony on Feb. 28 for the March 1 hearing on HB 3152. This testimony is to rebut the misleading and inaccurate testimony of Tom Hoffert representing the Salem Chamber of Commerce.

The final line of that testimony urges the committee to “focus on energy generation neutral policies to achieve greenhouse gas reduction emissions.” This approach, which is the current policy of the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC), is an artificial and improper constraint that can only raise the cost of achieving GHG reductions. It has the effect of creating a policy silo for each utility that serves an area. By encouraging the PUC to look for comprehensive low-cost solutions, HB 3152 will lower costs of GHG reductions for all utility customers.

The PUC is fully engaged in guiding all energy utilities in reducing their GHG emissions. It will guide the gas utilities in complying with the GHG reduction requirements of the Environmental Quality Commission. It will also guide implementation of HB 2021 (2021 Session) by Portland General Electric and Pacific Power. That law requires elimination of fossil fuel generation by 2040 within cost and reliability constraints. Only by taking a comprehensive approach among all utilities can the PUC minimize the costs of necessary reductions.

It is untrue that banning existing gas customers from paying for new gas pipes to new homes is inconsistent with the treatment of electric utility customers. As an existing gas customer I strongly oppose paying for new gas pipes to new homes that will continue to emit GHGs and other pollutants for many decades. I don't plan to be a gas customer for much longer. In contrast, virtually everyone will always be connected to the electric grid. It is these gas pipe extension fees that burden low-income households and fixed-income seniors.

The cost of these pipes is a necessary part of building new gas heated homes. Only if the developers pay these costs can they make economically appropriate fuel choices. With HB 3152 developers can still choose to build gas heated homes, they will just have to pay the costs of their choices.

If these homes do not use gas, the pipes are not needed. I should not be forced to pay for them. The current system is the one that limits choice.

There is no option for the PUC to do nothing about reducing GHGs. Regulations to reduce GHG emissions are here and more are coming at the state and federal level. The policy of continued massive emissions of GHGs by the gas and electric utility sector is madness. HB 3152 will encourage the PUC to take a comprehensive least-cost approach to reducing emission while keeping retail rates as low as possible.

Thank you,
Dr. Phillip Carver
& 350 Salem OR