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March 28, 2022

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Bobby Levy, Vice-Chair Emerson Levy and the other members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and the Environment,

I am writing today on behalf of Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) to express our enthusiastic support for the HB 3459 with the accompanying -4 and -5 amendments. COIN is a network of nearly 50 grassroots Indivisible groups located in every part of Oregon that collaborate to protect democracy and implement progressive values through voter outreach and education, campaigns, and elections, holding our elected leaders accountable, and advocating for legislation that best reflects our values.

HB 3459 clearly aligns with COIN'S values. We agree with the bill's moral perspective: **no Oregonian should be cut off from an essential service like heat and electricity simply because they are truly unable to pay for it.** Ever since Congress passed the Public Utility Act of 1935, there has been a near consensus that electricity is more than just a commodity. It is also an essential service like police and fire protection or mail delivery. We are saddened by those who have submitted testimony against this bill with what appear to be hateful statements such as "this creates a class of ne'er-do-wells", "pay your bills or live on the dark", or "I don't believe in enabling bad behavior." We know that many of our neighbors are struggling right now through no fault of their own. They need our support, not our condemnation.

We also know that low-income and the most vulnerable Oregonians are disproportionately impacted by heat domes and cold events due to climate change. Disconnections only add to their health, financial, and educational burdens. We need to design and put systems in place that reflect our new climate reality. This bill may not be the ultimate solution, but it is an appropriate step at this time.

While we are having a difficult time tracking all the amendments, it is our understanding that HB 3459 as amended would provide an additional temporary \$5 million for low-income energy assistance through the Oregon Energy Assistance Program until 2026. Low-income households are defined as those households that fall at or below 80% of area medium income and households already receiving state-administered low-income assistance through programs such as the federal low-income assistance program. We applaud Portland General Electric and Pacific Power for agreeing to support the additional \$5 million in energy assistance. This is the sort of "good neighbor" perspective we like to see from our utilities.

HB 3459 would help to address the energy burden of the most vulnerable Oregonians and enhance their quality of life.

Supporting HB 3459 is the right choice for moral, ethical, and practical reasons. We encourage the members of this committee to endorse this bill and help it continue through the legislative process so it can become law.

Respectfully,

Jeff Hammarlund on behalf of the
COIN Legislative Team and the
COIN Climate Energy and Environment