

Submitter: Laurel Merz  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure: SB1520

Laurel Merz  
2780 Elinor St  
Eugene, OR 97493  
(541) 961-3388  
Laurelmerz@gmail.com  
21st February, 2024

Oregon State legislators

Honored Members,

I write to you today as a daughter of the great state of Oregon. I'm a Hood River native (go eagles). I am happily back in my home state after a unfortunate stay in Butte County CA. My family, my husband, 3 kids, mother, father in law, 2 dogs and 3 cats moved to Paradise CA in summer of 2018. I worked in the emergency department in this lovely small town, my husband taught at the community college just south of our town. On November 2018, we lost everything we owned in the Campfire due to the negligence of PG&E. It's funny what people say when you lose all your belongings- it's just stuff, at least you're all alive. And that's true. But hearts are big and hold many things. My children and family and pets survived. But every member of my family suffers from PTSD, my older kids dropped out of school, are just getting back on their feet, thank god for GED programs. Some things are just things that are also imbued with history, the cedar chest my dad (who died in my early 20's) is gone, irreplaceable. My mothers art, my grandmothers jeweler, her sideboard, my uncle Fred's work bench, our photos, our children's memory books, art, report cards, or our wedding photos, no value- but irreplaceable. PG&E stole this from me. For 8 hours the day of the fire I had no idea where my child was. She was stuck on a bus home from ponderosa elementary. She drove through fire, watching homes, cars and animals destroyed by fire. My mother ran out of gas and had to catch a ride with a guy in a motor home. Sat at Costco for hours as we all tried to get to Chico and reunite. So, what I'm saying is that day- and the ripples of loss, there's no number that will heal that. We will never be made whole. PG&E has mitigated their loss by claiming bankruptcy, our lawyers will take 30% of what we get. Our insurance went bankrupt. So, we didn't get all we could have and what we paid for. Paying state and federal taxes, on top of all that, like this is an income that we worked for, is insulting. We didn't earn this. We didn't ask for it. We're just trying to build a new life. Please consider your support. Feel free to reach out with questions. With love from Eugene which is treating us well,

Laurel Merz FNP-C