

February 4, 2025

To: Chair Lively and Members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

From: Tiffany Brown, Lane County Emergency Manager

Re: Testimony in Support of HB3171

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak today in support of HB3171, specifically in support of extending the performance period for the Energy Resilience Plan project made available to all 36 counties. Today I want to talk to you just a little about what the project looks like currently at the local level, and how giving jurisdictions more time to complete plans will result in more valuable experiences, outputs, and outcomes for all involved—the counties and the state.

This project is a great idea, and it's a new idea for counties. It presents a valuable opportunity for counties to convene local public safety partners and utility providers to collaboratively identify, map, assess, and provide an analysis of the energy landscape and environment. The objective is to arrive at a better understanding of our respective energy resources to identify community priorities and mitigate future risk. The project also provides fodder for ODOE's long-term strategic planning efforts.

I appreciate the flexibility of this project because it recognizes there is no one-size-fits-all for counties in Oregon and the project. The project guidelines contain specific required elements for the energy resilience plans, but the guidance is relatively flexible to accommodate the diversity of Oregon counties. For example, counties have been afforded latitude about how to use the \$50K award, and they are not required to be exhaustive in their outreach and analysis. Also, among required (shall) elements listed in the bill, there are also a number of elective (may) ideas indicated.

Another feature of the project flexibility is that counties are empowered to establish their own planning process. A number of counties have already or are preparing to kick off their project in a variety of ways. Some counties are pooling money to launch the project regionally while others like mine need a different approach. What I think is most important to note here is that we're seeing counties emergency managers do what they do best, which is to reach across the aisle to either partner directly or collaborate in some fashion—I was just asked to join a collaborative to share ideas. There is great potential for continued synergy. Regardless of varying needs/approaches across the state, we could all use more time.

The project is multi-faceted and time-consuming—we need to convene partners, identify new players, gather data, map resources, and facilitate discussion around priorities and action items. From the mere standpoint of size/population, larger counties have more in front of them than rural counties — things are bigger, often more expansive, and the analysis piece takes on a life of its own with more players in the room. And though the grant says we don't have to include all utilities, it is honestly counterintuitive to our training as planner and emergency managers, which calls on us to include the whole community and relevant voices in all we do. Rural counties acting

alone may feel the strain of the new project based on limited personnel resources. In cases both large and small, more time would allow counties time to establish a process and be more exhaustive in our efforts.

Some counties, like Lane, already have some of the required elements established—we have already identified resilience hubs in vulnerable areas and have a number of the required elements already mapped. Through that lens, we view a time extension as an opportunity to take a deeper dive in some of the areas that aren't required or that are particularly relevant to our region like broadening participation to examine other facets of the energy environment.

More in the weeds with another illustration, the project asks us to determine burn rates for essential facilities. It is a solid idea that requires developing a methodology in advance, e.g. what length of time do we assign and how do we standardize responses across partners? My county is still in the process of establishing methodology and collecting existing data so that we're well-prepared to convene partners when the time comes. Other counties I've spoken to are in the process of ironing out some of the same pieces and different ones. Having found ourselves in a more complex environment than anticipated at the outset, extra time would allow each of us to perform a greater degree of due diligence and intention.

Finally, the project requires contributions to other significant efforts locally and statewide. All counties are required to incorporate the project into their Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans. From a timeline standpoint and depending on where a County is with their NHMP process, this step can take some time on its own since NHMP committees tend to convene only semi-annually, and it is a relatively robust planning effort in its own right.

In conclusion, every county stands to uniquely benefit from extending the performance period for the county energy resilience plan project: Some need more time to simply complete the basic requirements, others are still coming to the table, more than a few have an added interagency piece to coordinate, while still others still have an appetite for doing more than the project requires.

I'll finish by mentioning how the local projects support future, broader efforts by the Oregon Department of Energy to increase energy resilience across the state. Almost ten years ago, as a rural county emergency manager, I participated in a similar/different local project to support the ODOE Fuel Action Plan. At that time, we were asked to identify all liquid fuel sources in each county and performed analysis of identified sites to assist the state in developing catastrophic planning assumptions and to establishing priorities. It is exciting—even moving-- to see how the original effort has evolved into the current effort, and I look forward to providing support to ODOE's strategic planning around energy resilience. Having more time to coordinate across counties with ODOE at the table will inevitably result in overall improvements for the project.

Thank you for your consideration.