

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Natural Resource
re: Oregon Department of Energy budget SB 5518**

February 11, 2025

**Jay Ward, Interim Director of Programs
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Senator Lew Frederick
Representative Emerson Levy
Co-chairs Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy, members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) and our members throughout the state, regarding the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) Fiscal Year 2025-2027 budget.

OEC supports the Governor's recommended budget for \$200 million in ODOE funding for the next biennium. As you know, pursuant to previously enacted legislation, ODOE has been directed to deliver new and important energy benefits to Oregonians. From helping communities adapt to damaging events like wildfires and winter storms, to building a new community Navigator to assist Oregonians to access programs which can save them both energy and money, to administering residential heat pump incentives, ODOE has really had to up its game.

Fortunately, the federal government has, to date, been an enthusiastic partner in funding this important work. However, the federal funding for energy efficient heat pumps is almost exhausted and its future is uncertain, while the severity and impacts of fire, smoke, ice and wind events persist. That is why OEC, as part of the Building Resilience Coalition urges you to invest an additional \$30 million in the ODOE Rental Home Heat Pump Program and another \$15 million in its Community Heat Pump Deployment program.

While the requested \$45 million in additional heat pump funding is not insignificant, it pales in comparison with the \$218 million Oregon had to pay for *additional* wildfire suppression in 2024. By helping Oregonians currently burning fossil fuels to convert to heating and cooling equipment powered by clean, renewable energy-generated electricity, the state will also reduce its greenhouse gas emissions—a proven contributor to uncharacteristic wildfires. The proverb that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure certainly applies in this instance.

In conclusion, OEC urges you to support ODOE heat pump programs with \$45 million in additional funding. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important funding request.

Sincerely,

Jay Ward
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