

**Testimony to the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Ways and Means
SB 5518**

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

Oregon Environmental Council support for the Oregon Department of Energy's Budget: SB 5518

Dear Co-Chairs Levy, Frederick and Members of the Committee,

OEC strongly supports funding Oregon Department of Energy's full budget. As a member of the Energy Advisory Working group for many years, I have observed how crucial the agency is to the safety and functioning of our state. Energy touches every aspect of our lives and ODOE has been an invaluable resource for data analysis, management of critical programs, a convener for timely conversations, and has provided technical assistance to vulnerable community members, local governments, businesses and public interest groups.

I am here in strong support of ODOE's full budget, including:

- Energy Planning and Innovation
- Energy Development Services
- Nuclear Safety and Emergency Response
- Administrative Services

The agency needs resources to maintain and add staff capacity. We are particularly supportive of ODOE's work to administer and do outreach to Oregonians to connect them to incentive programs that help save energy and cut costs. We support the \$25 million Community Renewable Energy Grant program as outlined in the Governor's Recommended Budget to help build energy resilience especially for rural Oregonians. In addition, ODOE's heat pump programs, which have been largely funded by federal and state monies, have either been exhausted or face an uncertain future. As part of the Building Resilience Coalition, we urge you to invest an additional \$30 million in the Rental Home Heat Pump Program and \$15 million in the Community Heat Pump Deployment program. Heat pump technology provides essential life-saving cooling at the highest efficiencies. ODOE's legislatively established programs not only reduce energy costs but also cut the climate pollution that is driving up costs in so many other areas through intensified wildfires, extreme weather, increases in agricultural and forest pests, and water scarcity that is threatening communities in our state.

With 36 consumer owned utilities, 3 investor owned utilities, and 3 gas utilities, Oregon's energy landscape is multifaceted. ODOE is a central entity whose programs support Oregonians statewide. While much of ODOE's budget is derived from energy providers, the programs it delivers are critical and implemented on behalf of all Oregonians.

Over the years I have seen the agency do strong strategic planning, be transparent, anticipate challenges and put action plans in place, take feedback, and facilitate understanding amongst different energy stakeholders. ODOE has outstanding leadership and staff and should be commended for their work.