



February 10, 2025

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: Support: SB 685 and -1 amendments

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock-Smith, and Members of the Committee,

Climate Solutions is a regional non-profit working to accelerate clean energy solutions to the climate crisis.

We support SB 685 and -1 amendments, as a responsible step to protect utility customers and the hydrogen industry.

Renewable hydrogen, specifically green electrolytic hydrogen, will play an important and increasing role in sectors of Oregon's economy that are hard-to-decarbonize over the coming decades. Climate Solutions has supported past legislative efforts to provide clarity and support for renewable hydrogen, including strong support for HB 2530 (2023). Our organization also serves as a part of the PNWH2 Hub, which is working to support the development of the hydrogen industry and make strategic use of federal funding.

Despite this engagement with the hydrogen industry in our region, we were surprised to learn that NW Natural was able to begin their blending pilot in Portland without notifying customers or the PUC, and we support this legislation as closing that regulatory gap. It would be hard to imagine that a water utility could start blending something into our water without notifying customers, especially if they were going to be paying a higher cost for it. This is no different.

Utilities communicate with their customers regularly, through monthly bills, newsletters and bill inserts sharing information about projects, safety, and more. Utilities also communicate regularly with the PUC. SB 685-1 just asks gas utilities to do what they already do regularly on other topics, communicate with their customers and the PUC before they begin blending hydrogen into people's homes. Washington has a similar requirement on the books and it does not seem to be holding their hydrogen sector back.

The climate crisis requires an all-hands-on-deck effort. It means every sector of the economy will need to adopt cleaner technologies & be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Oregon has the opportunity now at the outset to get it right and support the burgeoning production and deployment of green electrolytic hydrogen into our economy where we need it most. We believe it is essential for the growth and success of the industry, and for the clean energy solutions it offers, that we channel renewable hydrogen towards its highest and best uses, and pursue those use cases with thoughtful community engagement.

As we pursue green hydrogen as a clean energy solution, there are serious environmental and consumer justice considerations around issues like safety, air quality and costs that require a thoughtful approach. SB 685 with -1 amendments is a step towards thoughtful engagement with impacted communities.

Oregon families have the right to know what is being delivered to and burned in their homes, and what the implications of changes to their gas supply may be for their health, safety and wallets. Utilities in particular, with their direct access to customers and their homes have a responsibility to respect that access, and communicate with their customers. SB 685 with -1 amendments simply requires gas utilities to notify their regulators and their customers when they plan to introduce a new molecule, hydrogen, into customers' homes.

Thank you for your consideration, I urge your support for SB 685 and -1 amendments.

Sincerely,

Claire Pihoda
Buildings Policy Manager
Climate Solutions