



# Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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February 13, 2025

To: Co-Chair Fredrick, Co-Chair Levy, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Policy Manager, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)

Re: Support for SB 5518

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The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB) is a statewide nonprofit consumer advocacy organization developed by citizens' initiative in 1984. CUB represents the interests of Oregon households by advocating for utility regulations and policies that protect your wallet. To date, we have saved Oregon ratepayers over \$10 billion. **We ask for your support on SB 5518 to support the Oregon Department of Energy's continued work toward an affordable energy future in Oregon.**

The Oregon Legislature has issued many energy directives over the years, showing foresight in understanding our future energy needs and acting proactively to meet our future energy goals affordably. ODOE provides critical technical expertise in energy systems to help us meet the Legislature's goals. As a member of the Oregon Energy Strategy Advisory Group, I have seen firsthand the efforts ODOE is making to evaluate pathways to meet our state energy policy objectives affordably and reliably.

Adequate funding and staff support is necessary to ensure ODOE can continue its current programming as well as develop and implement new incentive programs created by the Legislature. ODOE manages important grant programs that help Oregon communities to support energy resilience, reliability, safety, and affordability. For example, ODOE manages a Grid Resilience Grant Program that helps our utilities make critical resiliency investments like in wildfire mitigation and equipment safety which are critical to reducing utility equipment wildfire ignition, as well as keeping our lights on. ODOE's Oregon Heat Pump Programs incentivize energy efficient heating and cooling systems for renters and low-income Oregonians.

Relatedly, ODOE's budget request includes funding to support its ability to connect with communities and make it easy for households to understand what energy efficiency incentives are available to them, as well as access educational materials about energy efficiency technologies. Oregon needs this community-level coordination and outreach to ensure Oregonians can take full advantage of the cost-savings opportunities, particularly those programs that help low-income families.

For the past few years, Oregonians have experienced significant utility rate increases for a variety of reasons including natural gas price volatility, aging utility infrastructure, inflation, and wildfire costs. And while Oregon's aggressive greenhouse gas reduction policies are economic overall, investments are necessary to support the energy transition away from fossil fuels. ODOE needs sufficient resources and capacity to continue to offer energy saving incentives, particularly with uncertainty around available federal funding. Please vote "yes" on SB 5518 and help keep energy costs low for Oregonians.