

**To:** Governor Kotek

**Date:** November 2024

**RE:** Oregon Department of Energy Community Renewable Energy Grant Program

The undersigned organizations are writing in support of the renewal and re-funding of Oregon Department of Energy's Community Renewable Energy Program. Following the passage of HB 2021, this landmark program has provided essential resources for public bodies across the state to plan and construct community-led energy and resilience projects. Importantly, at least half of this funding was designed to reach environmental justice communities that have been historically-unserved, like communities of color, lower-income communities, and rural communities.

The Oregon Community Renewable Energy Grant Program (CREP) is unique in several ways:

- 1.) First, it is exclusively available for applicants outside of the City of Portland. This has allowed the program to serve rural communities who often lack the bandwidth and expertise to apply for, compete, and secure large federal renewable energy grant awards. As a result, CREP has been able to successfully connect with rural and Tribal entities like the City of Pilot Rock, Wasco County Soil & Water Conservation District, Phoenix Talent School District, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and many others since its inception.
- 2.) Next, CREP is enabling applicants who have historically struggled to tap into formative state and federal tax credits to fund their locally-sourced clean energy projects. Traditionally, complex and expensive financing arrangements have been uniquely tailored for a project, leaving many of Oregon's schools, hospitals, and other critical facilities behind. With this program, however, a variety of public entities (i.e. cities, counties, Tribes, and school and irrigation districts) are much more capable to plug into transformative dollars.
- 3.) Third, the program funds both planning and construction of renewable energy projects. This is worth noting, as few programs exist that support initial planning and feasibility of renewable energy, which remain some of the most significant barriers to advance locally-led community energy projects. Historically, federal grants available through the US Department of Energy have been "last in line" funding sources, largely available for construction only after identified projects have completed full feasibility.
- 4.) Last, and most importantly, CREP effectively incentivizes energy resilience planning and project development. This includes pairing an energy generation source with on-site storage to ensure the facility and community can respond to and recover from a natural disaster or grid disruption more quickly. With increases in frequency and duration of

these events from ice storms, floods, and wildfires, calls for energy resilience and independence from rural and Tribal communities have never been louder.

This wildly popular program continues to be oversubscribed, demonstrating the need, value, and impact of community-driven clean energy development. To date, CREP has received over 200 applications, selecting 94 of these projects over three phases from 2022 to 2024. This selection process has resulted in \$42M of funds being awarded, though applicants requested nearly \$100M over the same period. With May 2025 slated as the final round of funding, many impactful projects are at risk of not receiving the resources necessary to plan and construct projects in their communities.

For these reasons, many entities across the state, including those listed below, are calling for the reinstatement of Oregon's Community Renewable Energy Grant Program and requesting \$25M be allocated to its continuation. The program has effectively supported a variety of community-led energy and resilience projects, and will serve an integral role in achieving Oregon's clean energy mandates moving forward.

We appreciate the time and consideration,

*Ameresco  
Bonneville Environmental Foundation  
Clackamas Community College  
Climate Solutions  
Community Renewable Energy Association  
Farmers Conservation Alliance  
Forth Mobility  
Green Energy Institute  
Heartwood Biomass LLC  
Hood River Energy Council  
Lake County Resource Initiative*

*League of Oregon Cities  
Oregon Coast Energy Alliance Network  
Rogue Climate  
Solar Oregon  
Sustainable Northwest  
The Climate Trust  
The Environmental Center  
Wallowa Resources  
Wisewood Energy  
Wy'East RC&D*

