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Testimony in support of HB2656

Chair Lively and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment:

I write as cofacilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, an organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians who are concerned about the climate crisis and encourage state action to address it. As rural and coastal Southern Oregonians, we live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought, rising sea level and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to impose on us. Because of this, we pay close attention to what is happening in the state legislature that relates to climate, especially when bills are filed that deter valuable activities undertaken by Oregonians to reduce their personal emissions.

A commonly applied measure of electrical generation greenhouse gas emissions efficiency is the number of grams of Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) released per kilowatt hour generated. Some years ago, (NREL 2012), in a comparison between coal-fired power plants and solar panels, reported that solar panels results in 40 g of CO₂e per KWH while the coal-fired power plant produced 1000 g of CO₂e per KWH, clearly a remarkable improvement arguing in favor of solar panels. This is echoed by Wigness (2023) who reported 41g of CO₂e per KWH noting that most of these emissions result from the production of the panels, an amount which is offset within the first three years of panel use.

Eisenson (2022) makes the interesting point that an acre of solar panels has a greater positive impact on atmospheric greenhouse gas concentration than an acre of trees.

Given the vast improvement offered by solar panels versus coal-fired power plant generation, it is only reasonable that a state seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should encourage residents to install solar panels, or take advantage of community solar projects to maximum extent possible. There is certainly immense economic value to households taking advantage of solar panels. Nath (2024) reported that, as of 2024, the cost per KWH for solar electricity was \$0.06 while disappointingly "solar still only accounts for 3.9% of the total power generated in the United States in 2023." One technique for encouraging residents to take advantage of solar generation is to establish net metering, "a billing mechanism that credits solar energy system owners for the electricity they add to the grid." (SEIA undated) This allows customer-generators

to benefit from the excess electricity they produce and pump into the grid over that which they consume.

We support HB2656 because this bill protects customer-generators from being charged a service fee, apparently particularly by investor-owned utilities, for their installation of solar panels or investment in community solar. We note that publicly-owned utilities seemingly are protected by the provision stating (OLIS 2025): “However, the Public Utility Commission, for a public utility, or the governing body, for a municipal electric utility, electric cooperative or people’s utility district, may authorize an electric utility to assess a greater fee or charge, of any type, if the electric utility’s direct costs of interconnection and administration of the net metering outweigh the distribution system, environmental and public policy benefits of allocating such costs among the electric utility’s entire customer base.”

For the above reasons, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now endorses HB2656 and encourages a ‘Do Pass’ recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Journet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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