

To House Committee on Climate, Energy and the Environment Testimony in Support of HB 2656 - Strengthening Net Metering

February 17, 2025

Chair Lively, Vice-chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Pat DeLaquil. I am an energy system modeler and climate policy analyst, and I organize with MCAT (Mobilizing Climate Action Together), which is a community of volunteers working on advancing a healthy climate and a green economy for future generations.

I am writing in support of HB 2656, which will help to strengthen net metering in Oregon. Since 1999, net metering has been helping Oregon ratepayers install solar and save money on their bills. However, the world has changed significantly since 1999 and the net metering program needs some updates. Rather than weakening net, an idea floated by recently PGE and met with resounding opposition from the communities and businesses, we need to be improving a program that has been effectively providing clean, resilient energy and bill savings to customers at a time when utility rates are rising every year.

Currently, the net metering program allows homeowners and commercial building owners to install solar on their roofs or property, but net metered customers are only allowed to have solar system capacity that is sized to meet their own electric usage, and they are not allowed to intentionally size a system larger than they need. HB 2656 would change that and allow a customer to increase the size of their solar system and then sell the excess generation back to the utility.

Rooftop solar provides benefits to the electricity grid by reducing the amount of grid power that needs to be imported. The solar energy is output to the local grid and is used to serve nearby customers' loads, thereby reducing stress on both the distribution and transmission networks. As both PGE and Pacific Power move to meet their HB 2021 targets, rooftop and community-based solar project are the most cost-effective near-term clean energy additions, as much of the grid-scale solar and wind resources east of the Cascades will require new transmission capacity, which is expensive and has long lead times.

I also want to emphasize that the net metering program is not just for the rich. Recent policies have expanded solar access to low- and moderate-income ratepayers, and the price of solar has dropped dramatically while the incentives available for low- and moderate- income homeowners have increased. In fact, 39% of the Solar + Storage rebate program funding has gone to low- and moderate-income homes.

I urge you to support SB 685. Now is a time to strengthen net metering, so we can continue to increase access. If Oregon adopts policies to strengthen net metering it will continue to keep bills savings available to customers at all income levels, while cleaning up our power supply and reducing demand on the grid.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pat DeLaquil
Gresham, OR

