

Submitter: Sean Borgerson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3179

I am writing to encourage the committee to not adopt House Bill 3179 as drafted. The Oregon legislature and the Oregon Public Utility Commission have already taken recent significant action to make energy costs more affordable and promote transparency by engaging more parties in utility rate matters. This Bill would add new costs (e.g., 'economic studies') that will eventually add to the burden on Oregon taxpayers and ratepayers.

House Bill 2475, passed by the Oregon legislature in 2021, expanded the Oregon Public Utility Commission's authority to set differentiated rates for low-income and energy-burdened customers. It also enabled groups representing low-income customers and environmental justice communities to receive funding assistance for participating in PUC proceedings.

As a result of HB 2475:

The Oregon PUC worked with PGE, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural Gas, and Avista to dramatically increase their discount programs for customers meeting certain income thresholds:

- PGE – up to 60% discount
- Pacific Power – up to 40% discount
- NW Natural - up to 85% discount
- Cascade Natural Gas – up to 95% discount
- Avista – up to 90% discount

There is no mention of these significant discounts, or how much they have recently increased, in any of the submitted testimony.

Significant funding is available to groups representing low-income customers to directly participate in utility proceedings before the Oregon PUC.

All of my family's bills have gone up, including electricity, water, gas, insurance, groceries, internet, car repairs, and home maintenance. I'm not happy about any of it, but the solution is to tame inflation by monitoring excessive government spending that requires printing more dollars and issuing more debt - and avoiding excessive new regulation that feels good but introduces complexity and new costs into the system.