



The Climate Reality Project[®]

PORTLAND CHAPTER

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members Pham, Golden, and Robinson,

Climate Reality Project's Portland Chapter writes in strong support of SB 92 with the -2 amendment which seeks to provide some definition, clarity, and certainty for the Oregon Community Solar Program and also extends the program.

As an organization which advocates for a just transition to clean energy, climate justice and public health, we wholeheartedly support this extension of the Community Solar Program which gives access to affordable clean energy for renters, low-income households, and others who cannot install solar on their own roofs, and brings Oregon closer to its goal of 100% clean electricity. We appreciate that the -2 amendment adds the potential for inclusion of distributed energy storage in community solar projects, adding to the resiliency of the system.

SB 92-2, will empower Oregon with real energy independence all while delivering more choices, more competition, cost stability to all ratepayers, and more opportunity for everyone.

Community solar is an energy solution that empowers anyone with an electric bill to choose affordable, locally generated solar power without needing to install a system on site. Each project has multiple subscribers who buy the energy and receive a credit on their electricity bill for their portion of power produced. It gives citizens and businesses the choice to participate and does not require state funding or state subsidies.

The capacity limit in the community solar program passed by the legislature in 2016 is nearing its limit. So the legislature must act to extend the program to ensure that projects already in the works can be completed, and Oregonians seeking new projects have the chance to take part.

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, community solar in Oregon has the potential to meet the electricity consumption several times over for customers who can't access behind-the-meter or on-site solar.* Passing SB 92-2— which will increase the low caps originally set by the Public Utility Commission and fulfill the legislative intent from 2016 of creating a workable and sustainable program— is a step towards meeting that potential.

Why we support community solar:

- Community solar protects public health and our climate by reducing greenhouse gas and other pollution from the electricity sector.
- Expansion of community solar can meet subscribers' increasing electricity needs as we switch from gas to electric vehicles and appliances while keeping costs lower.*
- Some Oregon community solar projects have over 50% low-income subscribers, and every community solar project has at least 10% low-income subscribers. This provision furthers environmental justice and utility affordability by providing a 20% bill savings to those that need it most.
- Community solar saves money for residents and for local businesses/governments, and generates economic benefits for small businesses, landowners, contractors, and subscribers.
- Community solar provides a choice for Oregon residents to advance renewable energy, even if they are renters or are experiencing low incomes. It's the only way that low-income ratepayers can receive 100% clean energy at a discount, just like a homeowner with solar would.
- Community solar strengthens the grid with non-utility investments in the distribution system.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration on how to provide Oregonians the certainty that they can invest in and benefit from community solar into the future.

Sincerely,

Helena Birecki
Interim Chair
Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter

* **Reference:** <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy24osti/87524.pdf> accessed 2/26. See Oregon-specific lines regarding community solar potential on pgs. 16 and 17, and section on Household savings starting on pg 28

About The Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter

The Climate Reality Project (CRP) Portland Chapter is a local, volunteer-led chapter of The Climate Reality Project, an international nonprofit of 5 million members led by climate leader and former US Vice President Al Gore, whose mission is to catalyze global solutions to the climate crisis. Our legislative committee bases its advocacy on CRP's 5 pillars: a just transition to clean energy, zero carbon transportation, climate justice and public health, green communities, and a fair, representative democracy. climaterealitypdx.com/, www.climaterealityproject.org