
March 3, 2025

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

RE: SB 88 Support

Chair Sollman, Vice-chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Jamie Pang, and I am the new Director of Programs and Policy of Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA), a member-based alliance of over 20 urban and rural communities across the state of Oregon facing the brunt of environmental racism and climate change. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 88.

Our support of SB 88 remains consistent with the other bills currently being considered regarding utility bills and its impact on people. It's no secret that surging utility bills and cost of living has been a challenge for many Oregonians. Oregon's three largest for-profit utility corporations have **raised their rates by nearly 50% since 2021**,¹ with no end in sight.

This is having a real impact on the communities that OJTA advocates for- including frontline, low-income, rural, BIPOC, and disabled folks who experience climate change first and worst. During OJTA's Summer listening tour in 2020, our members and their communities have shared their growing concern with the rising cost of living and cost of heat and energy. These members have shared that their communities don't understand their bills and are frustrated by the lack of transparency about their charges and what their charges are going to. SB 88 would help address this issue by requiring for-profit utility companies to submit an annual report to the Public Utility Commission detailing nonrecoverable expenses, and also prohibit them from recovering advertising, legal and lobbying fees from ratepayers.

Simply put, frontline communities have had to make difficult choices, such as choosing between paying for essentials like medication or electricity- a struggle that can become **life-threatening** during extreme weather events like heat waves and arctic storms.

¹ This encompasses Oregon's three largest utilities: PGE, PacifiCorp, and Northwest Natural.
<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2024/12/20/state-regulators-approve-more-electricity-rate-hikes-for-oregonians-in-2025/>

By ensuring that utilities aren't passing on their lobbying or advertising fees to everyday people,² we could save them collective millions, in addition to ensuring customer bills are instead going to key investments like renewable infrastructure.³ **Lowering utility bills and improving transparency in bills is urgent.**

On behalf of OJTA and our members, I urge you to support SB 88 as part of the larger effort to address the rising utility costs this Session.

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² As another example, Northwest Natural made \$78.9 million in net income this quarter. See <https://www.gurufocus.com/news/2721996/northwest-natural-holding-co-reports-q4-eps-of-112-and-revenue-of-37088-million-missing-estimates>

³ In the case of Northwest Natural alone, for example, it was found in 2024 that new customers were being charged a collective \$13.7 million in overcharges due to lobbying and construction costs. See *In the Matter of NW Natural Request for General Rate Revision, PUC Decision No. 24-359* (Oct. 24, 2024), available at <https://apps.puc.state.or.us/orders/2024ords/24-359.pdf>. See also <https://earthjustice.org/press/2024/oregon-regulators-help-curb-spiking-energy-bills-by-phasing-out-gas-subsidies-and-removing-13-7-million-in-overcharges>.