



4145 NE Cully Blvd., Portland, OR, 97630 | 503-290-8570

March 3rd, 2025

To: Senate Interim Committee on Energy and Environment

RE: Support SB 88

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

I am Annabelle Rousseau, the Advocacy Coordinator at Verde, a community based organization focused on building environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise. Verde wholeheartedly supports SB 88, which seeks to prohibit utilities from including their costs for lobbying, advertising, and industry association fees in customer charges.

This bill is first and foremost about energy affordability, which is a foundation at Verde. We are based in the Cully neighborhood in NE Portland, one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Portland. Many of the households in our community are BIPOC, low-income, elderly, or have young children, who have felt the burden of rising utility bills the last several years.

Removing the costs of utility's lobbying, advertising, and industry association fees from customers' bills will not only make energy more affordable, but will directly impact community health and savings. The costs of utility's lobbying, advertising and industry fees shouldn't be billed to Oregonians who are just trying to get by. Those costs should come out of utilities' pockets, as they continue to rake in record breaking profits while raising rates for customers.

Energy burden is a significant threat to community health, especially as Oregon experiences hotter summers and colder winters. Due to rising rates, households are afraid to turn on their heat during the middle of the winter and if they have AC, they wait to turn it on in the middle of a heat wave. This type of energy use is dangerous. Heat and cold stress can turn fatal<sup>1</sup>. By 2022, nearly half a million households earning 200% or below the Federal Poverty Level were energy burdened in some Oregon Counties, a number that has grown since 2020<sup>2</sup>. Community members shouldn't have to pick between paying for food, medication, or their energy bills. Selective energy use during the winter and summer is also connected to food insecurity, another stressor linked to increasing chronic illness. By lowering energy bills, we will be protecting vulnerable community members while providing savings to all Oregonians. Community members living paycheck to paycheck need all the savings they can get.

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<sup>1</sup> Hernandez (2023). Energy Insecurity and Health: America's Hidden Hardship.

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20230518.472953/>

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Department of Energy (2024). 2024 Biennial Energy Report.

<https://www.oregon.gov/energy/save-energy/Pages/Home-Energy-Score-Communities.aspx>



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It is unacceptable to expect hard working Oregonians to pay for costs that should come out of utilities' hundreds of millions in profits. Communities in Oregon are struggling with the rising costs of living, especially with their utility bills. Utilities aren't a luxury, they are a necessity. We need to ensure that community members are paying just for the services they need, rather than their utility bills also including advertising, legal, and lobbyist fees.

Thank you for your consideration,

Annabelle Rousseau  
Advocacy Coordinator  
Verde