

March 27, 2025

To: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection

Subject: Support HB 3792

Dear Chair Sosa, Vice-Chair Chaichi, Vice-Chair Osborne, and Members of the House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection,

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (Oregon PSR) is an organization of over 2,000 health professionals and public health advocates working to address the gravest threats to human health and survival. As utilities increase rates, some households are struggling or simply unable to pay their energy bill. Economic energy insecurity has profound implications on health. For this reason, Oregon PSR is submitting testimony in support of HB 3792. This bill increases much-needed funding for the Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) to \$40 million each year.

Since 2021, households served by Portland General Electric (PGE) and Pacific Power saw their energy bills increase by nearly 50%. Moreover, PGE and Pacific Power disconnected nearly 58,000 households last year. Bill payment assistance programs have not kept up with these increases and inflation. Energy-burdened households struggling or unable to pay their energy bill are forced to make decisions that are costly health-wise. Households facing a potential shut-off will most likely forgo basic necessities such as food and medicine to pay their energy bill and consequently face adverse health outcomes like unhealthy or unsafe temperatures in their home.<sup>1</sup>

Expanding OEAP will help meet the demand of low-income qualifying Oregonians in need of energy assistance. Unlike federal bill payment assistance (LIHEAP), OEAP is customer-funded and more flexible. Federal funding is uncertain, and OEAP will provide stable and consistent assistance for Oregonians. Oregon PSR strongly urges you to pass HB 3792 out of committee.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> "Energy Insecurity And Health: America's Hidden Hardship," Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, June 29, 2023 . DOI: 10.1377/hpb20230518.472953



# OREGON PSR

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



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