

April 1, 2025

House Committee on Judiciary

Diane Turnbull, Gates, OR --In Opposition to HB 3917

Chair Kropf and members of the Committee, my name is Diane Turnbull. I am the Executive Director of Upward Bound Camp in Gates. Upward Bound, a non-profit organization, has been serving Oregonians with disabilities since 1978. Our campers range in age from 12 to senior adults. Some of the campers have been coming to UBC for more than 40 years. Our goal has always been to serve everyone who wants to come to camp regardless of support needs and sometimes that means providing 1:1 counselor to camper support. Traditionally, we have offered year-round camp experiences, including Holiday Camps for folks who didn't have families to spend Thanksgiving or Christmas with. Until September 2020.

During the Labor Day fires in 2020 the camp was serving as the base camp for wildland firefighters working the Beachie Creek Fire. None of us had any idea that we would experience a fire on our own property on September 7th, 2020.

Most of you are aware of what happened on September 7th, high winds, extreme temperatures and smoke-filled air a combination of factors resulted in numerous fires and very low air quality across the state for weeks. The high winds we experienced that day and into the evening caused a tree to blow over and hit a transformer on the SW corner of our 18 acre property, ultimately destroying 33,000 square footage of activity spaces, bunkhouses and storage buildings.

Residents of the Santiam Canyon were told that Pacific Power would be turning off electricity due to the expected extreme weather. Unfortunately, they did not turn off the power and as a result Upward Bound Camp still hasn't been able to return to year-round services. We have spent the last 4 years providing summer camp using tents and portable showers and toilets.

I am here today to not only share the camp's story and our struggle for justice, but to ensure that future victims have the opportunity to hold power companies responsible when they fail to act responsibly.

What happened at Upward Bound didn't just affect me, but hundreds of campers with disabilities, their families and many of our camp staff, members of the Gates community, who relied on the year around income they received as members of the Upward Bound camp team.

Utility companies who do not heed warnings and ignore direct orders from their own fire experts and marshals, must be held accountable. Pacific Power was reckless in their disregard of vulnerable people, like those served at Upward Bound, and signing this bill into law will allow power companies to continue to disregard the safety of their customers in favor of shareholder gains. I urge you to Vote No on HB 3917. Thank you.