

Submitter: Julie Williams
On Behalf Of: Seeds for the Sol
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I am Julie Williams, the founder and director of Seeds for the Sol. We work closely with Energy Trust of Oregon and Earth Advantage disbursing energy efficiency incentives and Community Heat Pump Deployment Program (CHPDP) funds to Oregonians struggling to make ends meet.

My staff encounters people living in unimaginable living conditions, often in manufactured homes in great need of repair. We see people huddled in two rooms with blankets hanging throughout the home to keep all of the heat in. We encounter people with \$300-\$400 winter bills due to inefficient heating and no method for cooling their homes. When out of the Energy Trust regions, there used to be nothing we could do for these people. They were just out of luck.

Available statewide, the CHPDP funding is a game changer. For example: we received a call from a couple that raised their family on wood heat in their country home. As they aged in place, the woodshed got more and more difficult. The husband was now on oxygen and a flame in their home was too dangerous. They were panicked and didn't know what they were going to do. Thankfully, we were able to utilize CHPDP funding to provide them with a ductless heat pump that could heat and cool their home and filter the air, to help the husband breathe better. We later received a sweet note from the wife letting us know how much the heat pump helped them, that her husband had since passed away, and that his physical comfort as well as his relief in knowing that she would not have to deal with the wood shed, made his end of life so much better.

We encounter stories like these daily. Our CHPDP Clients often contact us after installs and share that their homes have never been so comfortable, or that their energy bills have dropped significantly, and we never could have done this without you."

CHPDP is a bridge that supports every Oregonian and provides broad reaching benefits to real people with real needs. One client said it best, "Finally, I feel like a government agency actually sees and supports me."

Your current budget framework has no investment in this program or its counterpart to help renters. These upgrades are life-changing, and more urgent than ever with

utilities raising our rates and our climate growing more extreme. Please re-invest \$15 million in CHPDP and \$30 million in the Rental Home Heat Pump program to maintain services for the next two years.

Additionally, regarding the ODOE Hub for Incentive Programs and Projects in Oregon (HIPPO) set up by SB 1536 in 2023. The HIPPO site is excellent, helping identify energy efficiency, solar, heat pump, and other incentives from the federal, state, utility, and local levels all in one place for Oregonians statewide. I have not seen a platform so thorough and specific to different regions and utility coverage. However, in our experience most people need help navigating the complexities of all of the energy incentives available to them. They get frozen and don't move forward. This year HB 3081, The HIPPO 2.0, seeks to expand the website into an active navigator program and is very important to delivering great programs and making them feasible. This is a service we strive to provide at Seeds for the Sol already. Having state resources to support this work will be a major upgrade for groups like ours all across Oregon. Please make a significant investment in expanding the existing HIPPO program with up to \$8 million for navigation services.

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