
March 5, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules

RE: SB 88 Support

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jamie Pang, and I am the Deputy Director of Programs and Policy for the Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA). We are a member-based alliance of over 20 urban and rural communities across the state. Together, we represent thousands of Oregonians who are on the frontlines of economic injustice, environmental racism, and the climate crisis. On behalf of OJTA, I am writing to express our support of SB 88 and the posted -3 amendment.

OJTA's support of SB 88 remains consistent with other proposed legislation currently being considered this session regarding utility bills and their impact on people. It's no secret that surging utility bills are making it challenging for many Oregonians to get by, especially with the rising cost of living. Oregon's three largest for-profit utility corporations have **raised their rates by nearly 50% since 2021**,¹ with no end in sight- and there has been a lack of transparency surrounding such increases.

This is having a real impact on the communities that OJTA advocates for. We have heard from our members and the communities they serve about their concerns with the high costs of heat and energy. Our members have also shared that their communities do not understand their utility bills and are frustrated by the lack of transparency about their charges and what their charges are going to.

The -3 amendment strengthens consumer protections by adding a presumption that lists non-service costs, such as lobbying, as unjust and unreasonable fees. It also introduces a 5 year pause during which a utility cannot seek recovery for an expense that the Public Utility Commission (PUC) had previously determined unjust and unreasonable, and require for-profit utility companies to submit an annual report to the PUC detailing nonrecoverable

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/>

expenses. The bill further prohibits utilities from passing marketing, legal, and lobbying costs onto ratepayers.

Simply put, frontline communities are being forced to make very difficult choices with some being forced to choose between paying for essentials like medication or electricity. These circumstances can become **life-threatening** during extreme weather events like heat waves and arctic storms. Oregonians should not be responsible for a for-profit utility's lobbying or litigation fees.

Lowering utility bills and improving transparency in rates is urgent. On behalf of OJTA and our members, I urge you to support SB 88 as part of the larger effort to address rising utility costs.

Thank you,

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