

Re: Testimony regarding HB 3179

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 3179: the FAIR Energy Act. My name is Twila Jacobsen and I live in Eugene, where a Public Utility, EWEB, provides electricity services. Lane County is served by a mixture of PUD and private providers. Rates are climbing, and many people are impacted by increasing utility bills. Since 2021, the state's largest for-profit utilities have raised residential billing rates by nearly 50%. Households that identify as low-income, African American, Latinx, or Native are more likely to be energy burdened and face a higher energy burden than the average household. Households in rural communities are also more likely to be energy burdened.

The FAIR Energy Act (HB 3179) is a crucial step in addressing these problems. The bill would allow state regulators to set energy utility rates at the lowest possible level, helping families avoid steep increases in energy bills. The increasing prevalence of extreme weather events further burdens community members, underscoring the need for energy affordability as climate change impacts continue.

The FAIR Energy Act allows utilities greater flexibility to use low-cost financing for necessary investments in the energy grid, keeping customer costs low. As we approach critical emissions reduction deadlines, the cost of a just transition will only rise, making it imperative that we act now. I strongly supports HB 3179 as a necessary step toward creating a fairer, more resilient energy system for all Oregonians.