



Service Employees
International Union
Local 503

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To: House Committee on Rules

From: Mike Powers, SEIU Local 503

RE: Support for HB 3179

Date: May 6, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Pham, Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Powers. I advocate for the working Oregonians represented by our Union, SEIU Local 503. Our Union represents over 70,000 people in every county in Oregon, primarily in the public service and in-home and facility care sectors. Thank you for the chance to voice support for HB 3179.

HB 3179 seeks to ensure that utility rate increases are not only fair, but also account for the broader economic challenges facing Oregon families. As the cost of living continues to climb, it's essential that the Public Utility Commission (PUC) considers the financial pressures felt by everyday Oregonians when making these critical decisions.

Rather than rehashing the details of the bill, I want to share the lived experiences of the people we represent. These are full-time workers, many of whom dedicate their careers to serving others, yet still struggle to afford basic necessities.

Before our latest bargaining agreement with the state, one of our members — a full-time employee at the Oregon Department of Human Services — was homeless along with their children. That family was not alone. Thanks to strong negotiations, a healthy economy, and your continued support, we secured a pay increase that allowed them to finally afford stable housing. That was life-changing for them.

However, the reality remains stark: wages for many still do not keep pace with the rising cost of living. In Eastern Oregon, a state worker cannot afford an apartment for themselves and their child. In Central Oregon, an in-home care provider is living in an RV trailer because housing plus utilities are out of reach. A recent internal survey reflects this crisis — over 70% of responding state-employed workers report being housing insecure, struggling to pay for rent and utilities.

This is why HB 3179 matters. The bill offers the PUC flexibility to phase in or adjust rate increases in a way that protects consumers from sudden financial strain. This approach ensures families and small businesses can maintain stability, even as we continue investing in essential services.



Another important provision we support is the bill's allowance for utilities to securitize debt for capital investments, under PUC oversight. This financing mechanism helps fund necessary infrastructure improvements without immediately burdening ratepayers. It's a smart, forward-looking strategy that supports both grid modernization and the skilled workforce needed to make it happen.

In closing, HB 3179 is a thoughtful, balanced proposal that safeguards working Oregon families while enabling responsible investment in our state's utility systems. I urge your support.

Thank you for your time and attention.