

Date: May 7, 2025

To: House Committee on Rules

Subject: FAIR Energy Act

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Drazen, Pham and members of the committee:

I am writing as a representative of Community Energy Project (CEP) in support of HB 3179 with the -8 amendment: FAIR Energy Act. CEP serves people on the front lines of climate change including those who are low-income, people of color, immigrants, seniors and people with disabilities. We offer DIY education on energy savings and safety, provide weatherization and safety supplies, connect low-income utility customers to community solar, and conduct home repairs, with full energy retrofits, all at no cost to our participants.

Community Energy Project serves some of Oregon's most vulnerable residents. 29% of CEP's clients are 55+ years of age, and 32% of households we serve have someone with a disability living in them. Many of these clients are living on a fixed income in inefficient housing. Inefficient housing paired with skyrocketing energy bills pushes vulnerable people to the edge. Many face utility disconnections and extreme temperatures indoors. This comes at a time when, at the federal level, safety nets such as energy assistance are at serious risk or have already been eliminated.

CEP supports HB 3179: FAIR Energy Act because access to clean and affordable energy is a human right. Unfortunately, far too many Oregonians from all constituencies are struggling to pay their energy bills. From 2021-now, Oregon's largest electric for-profit utilities have raised their rates by 50%, our largest gas for-profit utility has raised rates roughly 40%, and one utility reported record profits in 2024—the same year we saw record disconnections. This has left far too many families in dire financial situations, having to choose what bills they can afford to pay and what services they can "live without". If they cannot afford their energy bill, these families do not have access to heating and cooling in their homes, which can have devastating consequences, especially in the increased amount of extreme weather events Oregon is and will continue experiencing.

The FAIR Energy Act empowers state regulators at the Oregon Public Utility Commission to consider household economic conditions when setting rates. The bill also moves any rate increases out of winter, when energy usage is at its highest. Additionally, the bill will increase transparency so that customers know what their money pays for and what to expect from any changes in energy bills.

I urge you to support HB 3179 so we can continue building strong Oregon communities, especially in places where it matters most.

Sincerely,

Greer Klepacki, Policy & Advocacy Manager with Community Energy Project
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