



Date: February 9, 2026
To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
From: Mike Powers, SEIU Local 503
RE: Support for SB 1582 -1

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Powers, and I represent SEIU Local 503. Our Union represents more than 70,000 workers in every county in Oregon, including public sector employees and care providers in homes and facilities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1582 -1. This bill will strengthen Oregon's electric grid, create and sustain family-wage jobs, and improve energy resilience for homes, businesses, and communities across the state.

A Smart Solution for a Changing Grid

Oregon's electric grid is under growing pressure. We have not expanded grid capacity. At the same time, extreme weather and wildfire risks are increasing. These changes make power outages and peak demand events more likely and more expensive.

SB 1582 offers a practical solution. The bill requires utilities to create Distributed Power Plant Programs that pay customers to use energy technologies in their homes and businesses — like batteries, electric vehicles, and smart appliances — to help support the grid when it needs it most.

Instead of relying only on large, expensive power plants and new transmission lines, this bill turns thousands of customer-owned devices into a flexible, fast-responding grid resource. This is a modern and cost-effective way to improve reliability.

Stronger Grid Reliability and Community Resilience

Distributed energy resources can:

- Reduce electricity demand during peak hours
- Provide backup power and voltage support
- Help utilities avoid costly infrastructure upgrades
- Respond quickly during emergencies

Because these resources are spread across homes and businesses, they create local reliability. When storms, heat waves, or wildfire-related outages occur, distributed energy can help keep lights on and critical services running.

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Creating and Sustaining Oregon Jobs

Virtual power plants are built from real infrastructure — batteries, solar panels, EV chargers, smart devices, and grid-connected controls. These systems must be installed, operated, and maintained by skilled workers in Oregon. These jobs cannot be outsourced.

The bill will increase demand for:

- Electricians and line workers
- Construction trades and technicians
- Engineers and system operators
- Customer service and program staff

These are not one-time construction jobs. Distributed energy systems need ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and coordination, which supports long-term employment across the clean energy and utility sectors.

The bill also supports:

- Union apprenticeship and training programs
- Prevailing-wage career pathways
- Workforce development for new energy careers

Conclusion

SB 1582 is a forward-looking policy that strengthens Oregon's grid, supports family-wage jobs, improves energy resilience for homes and communities, and keeps families safe during extreme weather and emergencies.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support for SB 1582.

Thank you for your time and consideration.