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February 11, 2026

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senator Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair
Senator Anthony Broadman
Senator Sara Gelser Blouin
Senator James I. Manning Jr.
Senator Mike McLane

Senate Committee on Judiciary
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Opposition to SB 1553 – Wildfire Cost Recovery

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO), and Redmond Economic Development Inc. (REDI), we appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to SB 1553.

The risk of severe wildfire affects every Oregonian. It is a statewide challenge that demands a comprehensive, consistent, and forward-looking policy approach. While lawmakers are rightfully seeking solutions, SB 1553 moves Oregon in the wrong direction. Rather than improving wildfire preparedness or accountability across the system, this bill narrowly targets a single company and introduces new financial and legal risks that ultimately harm customers, communities, and Oregon's economic future.

SB 1553 singles out PacifiCorp by restricting its ability to recover costs associated with wildfire claims, settlements, and judgments - even when those costs may have been prudently incurred. The bill limits cost recovery through rates whenever a wildfire is determined to involve utility equipment, regardless of broader contributing factors. This approach sets a concerning precedent by targeting one company instead of advancing a uniform, statewide framework that recognizes wildfire as an everyone problem. A piecemeal solution aimed at a single utility does not meaningfully reduce wildfire risk and undermines confidence in Oregon's regulatory environment.

The bill also interferes with the existing role of the Public Utility Commission, which is already charged with ensuring that only reasonable and prudent costs are passed on to customers. In



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addition, SB 1553 risks interfering with ongoing judicial proceedings, inserting legislative action into matters currently being addressed through the courts. This raises serious concerns about precedent and the long-term implications for how complex liability issues are resolved in Oregon.

Investor-owned utilities rely on access to national and global capital markets to finance critical infrastructure: system hardening, wildfire mitigation, transmission upgrades, and grid modernization. SB 1553 would harm PacifiCorp's ability to access capital markets, increasing financial uncertainty and risk. At its core, access to affordable capital is essential to economic development, as it enables the infrastructure investments that support housing, business growth, and job creation.

With an increase in capital costs, higher borrowing and insurance expenditures ultimately flow to customers. Increasing electric rates at a time when affordability is already a significant concern for families and employers and increasing the cost of capital hurts customers directly and places additional pressure on households and businesses across Oregon when cost containment should be a top priority.

The financial constraints imposed by SB 1553 also threaten the reliability and resilience of Oregon's energy system. Increased costs and uncertainty make it more difficult for utilities to invest in maintenance, upgrades, and expansion of critical infrastructure. These same pressures undermine Oregon's clean energy and climate goals by discouraging investment in renewable generation, transmission, and grid modernization. Clean energy developers already cite wildfire liability as a major concern, and this bill would only intensify those challenges.

EDCO represents communities and businesses that depend on affordable, reliable, and predictable energy service to grow and create jobs. Policies that undermine utility investment, target individual companies, and increase uncertainty make Oregon less competitive in attracting new business, business expansion, and workforce development. Our current pipeline of recruitment and expansion projects, expected to generate over 3,000 jobs, depends on continued power system improvements, and passage of this bill puts those investments and jobs at risk in the communities we serve.

The Bend Chamber of Commerce represents more than 1,650 members and approximately 8,500 businesses across Central Oregon, spanning a diverse range of industries that depend on affordable, reliable, and predictable energy to operate, grow, and make long-term investments. Our members are directly affected by policies that influence energy costs, infrastructure investment, and regulatory certainty, all of which play a critical role in economic competitiveness and community stability. The Bend Chamber engages on issues where proposed policies may increase costs, create uncertainty, or discourage investment in essential infrastructure, particularly when affordability and resilience are top concerns for employers, workers, and families across our region.



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Redmond Economic Development Inc. (REDI) is a private, non-profit corporation with the mission to create prosperity through community and business development, increasing the quality and number of jobs, as well as capital investment in the community. Redmond is a hub for manufacturing in Central Oregon and relies on access to affordable power for the community to grow and add family wage jobs that drive revenue for our state. This bill will put those priorities in jeopardy and have unintended consequences that will not solve this issue.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to oppose SB 1553. Oregon can and should pursue policies that strengthen wildfire resilience and accountability through comprehensive, statewide solutions—without increasing costs for customers, undermining energy reliability, interfering with the judicial process, or jeopardizing our economic and clean energy future.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sara Odendahl
CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce

Jon Stark
CEO
EDCO

Steve Curley
Director
Redmond Economic Development, Inc.