



February 13, 2026

To: Senator Prozanski, Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Thatcher, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Katie Chamberlain, Regulatory Manager, Renewable Northwest

Re: Opposition to SB 1553

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

Renewable Northwest is a regional, clean energy advocacy nonprofit based in Oregon. We are dedicated to decarbonizing the electricity grid by accelerating the transition to clean energy resources. Our members include renewable energy and storage developers and businesses, environmental organizations, and consumer advocates. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 1553, which would prohibit utilities from recovering certain expenses related to wildfire litigation for fires ignited between 2020 and 2025. **While we understand the intent of this legislation and agree with the importance of fast and fair victim compensation, RNW is concerned that SB 1553 would negatively impact energy affordability, grid reliability, and Oregon's clean energy transition, and as such, we respectfully oppose the bill.**

SB 1553 threatens utility financial stability, with serious ramifications for Oregon ratepayers. The bill sends a troubling signal to credit rating agencies, increasing the risk of further utility credit downgrades. A downgrade would raise borrowing costs, making it more difficult and expensive to invest in new energy infrastructure. It would also increase wildfire insurance costs. These increased costs would ultimately be borne by Oregon consumers, many of whom are already struggling to afford their electricity bills. In the worst case scenario, SB 1553 could increase the risk of utility bankruptcy with negative consequences for ratepayers and energy suppliers.

SB 1553 also poses risks to grid reliability. Electricity demand is growing rapidly in Oregon and across the region, driven by new large loads and electrification. At a time when utilities need to rapidly bring new generation, transmission, and storage resources online, SB 1553 would make that harder by raising the cost of capital and harming utility financial health. The region faces the

possibility of energy supply shortfalls before 2030; SB 1553 would only exacerbate that risk by delaying or discouraging investment in needed resources.

RNW members who develop wind, solar, and storage projects are particularly concerned about the impacts of bills like SB 1553 on clean energy development in Oregon. Developers rely on financially stable utilities as counterparties when entering into long term power purchase agreements (PPAs). If a utility's financial position is weakened or perceived as unstable, developers may be unwilling or unable to sign PPAs and lenders may be reluctant to finance projects. Beyond making clean energy financing more challenging, SB 1553 would also make it more difficult and costly for developers to secure insurance. All together, these impacts could render Oregon an unattractive place to build clean energy projects, jeopardizing our ability to meet the state's clean energy requirements.

Finally, Oregon needs forward-looking policies that significantly reduce wildfire risk, provide timely and fair compensation to wildfire victims, and enable utilities to make the investments needed for system reliability and decarbonization. Those issues and potential solutions deserve careful consideration, including through the Public Utility Commission's wildfire liability study which will be conducted by an expert consultant, as well as any future efforts to inform the 2027 legislative session.

For these reasons, we respectfully oppose SB 1553.

Thank you.

Katie Chamberlain
Regulatory Manager
Renewable Northwest