



## OREGON CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB

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To: Members of the House Energy and Environment Committee

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: March 3, 2015

RE: House Bills 2745 and 2941

Chair Vega Pederson and Members of the Committee: Good afternoon, my name is Rhett Lawrence and I'm the Conservation Director for the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters in Oregon, I wanted to offer our enthusiastic support for House Bills 2745 and 2941.

As an organization with a long history working in support of renewable energy in Oregon, we believe that both of these bills can go a long way toward continuing the expansion of solar power in our state. Solar energy is already a critical component of Oregon's clean energy mix and its importance is only growing. Living in an increasingly carbon-constrained world, we need to be exploiting and promoting renewable energy wherever and whenever we can.

House Bill 2745 will extend the sunset for the feed-in tariff (FIT) pilot program, which has been a very effective program for encouraging the expansion of solar power in Oregon. And as we move toward the PUC's consideration later this year of the value of solar power, having the FIT program still operational will continue to provide valuable information about the benefits of solar energy in our state. It just makes sense to remove the sunset for this important pilot program and let it continue to provide its essential benefits.

House Bill 2941 could likewise significantly expand the reach of solar energy in Oregon by establishing a community "solar gardens" program. Such a program would allow consumers in neighborhood associations and the like to combine their resources to create distributed generation solar energy projects from which all could benefit. Solar gardens programs have proven quite popular and effective in other states and we believe we would see similar results in Oregon. Again, any program that can support the expansion of renewable energy in Oregon in a cost-effective manner is a program that we believe to be worthy of support.

For these reasons, we strongly support extending the feed-in tariff through House Bill 2745 and creating the solar gardens program in HB 2941. Solar energy is playing an increasingly important role in our state's renewable energy mix, and solar technology presents a wealth of job creation opportunities for our economy. We believe these programs can play an important role in keeping that momentum going, so we respectfully urge this Committee to pass both of these bills.

Thank you very much for considering my comments and I'd be happy to answer any questions.