



Oregon Hearth, Patio &
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April 4, 2017

To: Rep. Helm, Rep. Johnson, House Energy and Environment Committee

From: G. Harvey Gail, MBA, Executive Director, Oregon Hearth Patio & Barbecue Association (503-585-8254; harvey@vannattapr.com)

RE: **HB 2725**

CC: *OHPBA Board of Directors, HPBA*

Oregon Wood and Pellet Stove Dealers Support

Our industry which represents dealers, installers and service companies of biomass heating appliances and natural gas heaters (wood and pellet stoves) is **in support of HB 2725**. Industry members also provide critical services to maintain chimneys and venting systems for biomass appliances in people's homes.

OHPBA believes **Oregonians should have the right to heat their homes in a responsible way using the fuel source that is available** to them and that fits their budget. In many rural Oregon towns, that source is **biomass** – wood, pellet and bio-bricks. These fuels must be used responsibly in EPA certified appliances using dry, seasoned wood and certified pellets. However, thousands of Oregonians are still using inefficient, dirty burning, and in many cases, poorly maintained, wood stoves. Air quality, both indoor and outdoor, suffers from the use of these outdated appliances. In many cases, this puts communities at risk of violating federal PM2.5 air quality standards. Risk of house fires from these appliances is also a real threat that has not been mentioned in hearings on this issue.

But many Oregonians in low income and rural areas **cannot afford new biomass heaters**, so they need financial assistance and the communities in which they live need financial support to help them move toward cleaner burning options. HB 2725 will provide that support.

We have some suggestions:

1. Programs should be simple and flexible to meet the unique needs of communities

These bills will reduce residential wood smoke, reduce the risk of house fires and keep Oregon families warm with affordable heat. **Don't let rules, red tape and a complex grant writing process get in the way of that.** It seems like there are a lot of requirements in the grant process (as described in the bill). This will be difficult for a small community with limited staff. So, keep the replacement rebate programs simple and flexible.



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For example, **the criteria for match support based on a city's population seems rather arbitrary** (Section 2 subsection 4). We suggest the population not be used as a basis for the match levels. Perhaps there's another way to determine what works for a particular community.

2. Consider the fuel as much as the appliance

While this is not specifically in this bill, it should be considered. Brand-new EPA certified wood stove won't burn clean **if the wood is wet**. So, if a community wants to use the grant funds to build a chord wood exchange center, let them do it. If pellet fuel in a community is too expensive make it affordable. If a community wants to build a bio-brick plant that uses forest slash from nearby logging operations, help them to fund it. If a community can't get the gas company to put in a gas line, help that happen. All new EPA certified Stoves are **dramatically cleaner** than any of the uncertified stoves. If a community wants to allow 4 gph stoves let them.

3. Make sure the programs use qualified installers

This may be handled in rulemaking, but it's important to address. Only highly qualified installers should install wood stoves. If you put fire in people's homes, it better be done right. Follow the example of Washington County in allowing only technicians certified by the **National Fireplace Institute**. They offer certifications in wood, pellet and natural gas appliance installation and service. Also, require chimney inspections to be handled by certified sweeps with the **Chimney Safety Institute of America** or the **Oregon Chimney Sweeps Association**. Certifications from these organizations should be required.

4. Involve the Oregon State Fire Marshal

Recognize that removal and replacement of uncertified wood stoves will have a positive impact on fire safety. Does the Oregon State Fire Marshal have any data on fire safety related to uncertified stoves, or chimney fires? **The cost savings of reduced damage, fewer calls to fire departments and reduced accidents and injuries and deaths must be factored in** to the cost benefit analysis to HB 2725. Those are real savings to local communities.

5. Help Oregon DEQ catch illegal stove sales

DEQ has had the authority to fine people for selling uncertified stoves, but they don't have the staff to handle it. Use funds from this program to support that effort.

Questions?

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