



22 March 2017

Senator Rod Monroe
Representative Barbara Smith-Warner
Co-chairs, Ways and Means Education Subcommittee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Monroe and Smith-Warner:

OSEIA is Oregon's solar trade association representing 90 member businesses. We write to you in support of Oregon Tech and the Oregon Renewable Energy Center (OREC) as they seek state support to fulfill their mandate in ORS 352.221 to "engage in renewable energy system engineering and applied research."

Oregon Tech is a leader in the development of university-based renewable energy generation that provide respected bachelor's and master's degrees in renewable energy engineering. Not satisfied to merely be an "ivory tower," Oregon Tech has worked consistently to generate most of its electrical power for its campus in Klamath Falls with geothermal and solar energy. It is also the home of the Geo-Heat Center, an internationally renowned repository of information and technical advice on geothermal energy development.

Oregon Tech established OREC to expand the development of renewable energy, provide technical assistance on its use, and engage with companies and communities to grow jobs in the energy sector.

Graduates of Oregon Tech have gone on to work in many sectors of the solar industry, whether for various solar installers or with manufacturers like SolarWorld. Several have also taken the extra step to found their own companies to carve out their own niche within the industry.

Workforce issues are a central concern for the industry. OSEIA recently released the Oregon Solar Plan, providing a blueprint for installing 4,000 megawatts of solar over the next 10 years. This is an ambitious but reasonable vision for the state. Oregon Tech will be a key source of graduates to fill the workforce needs of the industry.

In addition, OREC's applied research mission will be an anchor for the innovation needs of the solar industry. Solar costs have been coming down over the last several years. Future cost reductions will depend on the innovations we can achieve. OREC must be strong in order to conduct and contribute the research base that will drive those innovations.

We hope that the legislature can help the solar industry in supporting OREC. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have question or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Bissonnette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jeff Bissonnette
Executive Director
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