

January 29th, 2019

House Committee on Energy and Environment  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE, Room D  
Salem, OR 97301

### **Multnomah County Supports HB 2242**

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Multnomah County asks for your support of House Bill 2242, a thoughtful approach to giving voice to Oregon's most vulnerable communities in the transition to a just, clean energy future.

In 2017, the legislature adopted Senate Bill 978, which initiated a process to consider the many trends that are changing the landscape of electric utilities and their regulation. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the process on behalf of Multnomah County, and want to recognize Oregon Public Utility Commission staff for their commitment to a process where all participants were heard. The SB 978 process made clear that having many voices and perspectives represented and heard is essential to moving us towards a more innovative, inclusive and equitable energy system in the future.

HB 2242 builds on the foundational work of the SB 978 process by codifying procedural and distributional equity in the work of the utility regulation in the Oregon.

First, it ensures that voices of low income and environmental justice communities will be heard by resourcing community organizations who are best equipped to represent their desires in the often complex proceedings of the Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC). In our work to advance a just energy transition, Multnomah County has been proud to partner with many of those individuals and organizations who are eager to share their expertise and experience at the OPUC.

Second, the bill seeks to institutionalize equitable process at the OPUC through the creation of the Office of the Low Income and Environmental Justice Advocate. While meaningful involvement of external voices is critical, a durable institutional commitment to advancing principles of justice is equally essential. This legislation would also allow the OPUC to fulfill its obligations under the 2007 Senate Bill 420, which required OPUC and other listed natural resource agencies to establish a position focused on environmental justice.

Finally, HB 2242 recognizes the profound impact energy poverty has on Oregonians across the state, and establishes a path to address the disproportionate burden low income rate payers face. Multnomah County is proud of the low income energy assistance and weatherization programs we provide to support the economic and well-being of our community members each day. However, unless we consider additional approaches to the challenge, we will never be able to address the devastation energy poverty brings to our communities across the state.

HB 2242 is the right approach for Oregon, and Multnomah County looks forward to working the Legislature, OPUC, utilities and the broad diversity of stakeholders to put HB 2242 into practice to advance a just energy transition in the state.

I appreciate your consideration of these comments and ask for your support of HB 2242.

Sincerely,



Tim Lynch  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Multnomah County Office of Sustainability