



February 28, 2019

Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon Legislature

Re: Environment Oregon supports House Bill 2618

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

Environment Oregon is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water and open space. We support House Bill 2618 because we believe Oregon should continue to incentivize rooftop solar across the state to achieve our climate goals, reduce energy costs for consumers, and increase the resiliency of the electrical grid.

The appeal of solar energy is simple: sunlight is abundant, present pretty much everywhere, and infinitely renewable. Oregon's Department of Energy calls solar the state's "most abundant and available renewable energy resource", helping to generate both electrical and thermal energy throughout the state.¹ As a renewable energy resource, solar has enormous potential to help reduce carbon emissions and air pollution at the same time by replacing energy from dirty fossil fuel power plants. In addition, rooftop solar panel installations give homeowners the opportunity to increase their energy independence and save money on their electricity bill while augmenting the resiliency of the electrical grid as a whole.² As the solar energy industry continues to grow and mature, the Legislature should help continue our state's strong track record of prioritizing solar energy by adopting House Bill 2618 to provide rebates for solar energy installation. House Bill 2618 will help Oregon continue to grow its solar energy capacity and help homeowners save money while also making tangible progress towards our climate and clean energy goals.

¹ "Solar." *Oregon.gov/Energy*, Oregon Department of Energy, www.oregon.gov/energy/energy-oregon/pages/solar.aspx.

²Sargent, Rob, et al. "Solar Homes." *Environmentoregon.org*, Environment Oregon, Dec. 2018, environmentoregon.org/feature/ame/solar-homes.

Electricity generation represents 28% of the country's carbon emissions, and moving towards 100% renewable energy is a key part of achieving the rapid emissions reductions that climate scientists say we need and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change.³ In addition to its importance in solving this global problem, rooftop solar also provides acute, real benefits to homeowners in the form of reduced electricity costs, price stability, and resiliency. Homeowners with rooftop solar installations in solar-friendly states can expect to save \$10,000 to \$30,000 on their electricity bill over a 20-year period, and producing energy at home helps insulate customers from wider price swings in the overall energy market.¹ In addition, rooftop solar helps reduce demand on the overall electrical grid and provides homeowners (and sometimes their neighbors) with electricity during power outages when paired with battery storage.¹

Perhaps unsurprisingly given all its benefits, solar energy represents a rising share of the United States' energy mix, as solar energy installation has increased an average of 59% every year over the past decade. This increase has been driven both by consumer demand and smart government policy to incentivize solar installations and drive down costs. Many homeowners in Oregon are already reaping the benefits of rooftop solar thanks to both state and federal incentives, and the state had almost 33 times as much solar electricity generation in 2017 compared to 2008, thanks to our strong RPS and statewide incentives for solar.² Unfortunately, the expiration of the statewide tax credit for solar at the end of 2017 has made it more difficult for homeowners to finance and install rooftop solar panels, threatening to slow this incredible progress. Rebates for rooftop solar still help encourage solar installation in urban centers like Portland, but much of the rest of the state is now missing one of the biggest prior drivers of solar installation. This is a shame for a number of reasons, not least of which is that solar resource availability east of the Cascades is 30 to 40% greater than the Willamette Valley and the coast.¹

Establishing a rebate program for solar installation will help reduce costs, drive installation, and make rooftop solar a possibility for all Oregonians. Environment Oregon urges you to adopt House Bill 2618 to help us achieve our climate goals, improve grid resiliency, and reduce electricity costs for homeowners all at the same time.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director, Environment Oregon

³Weissman, Gideon, et al. "Renewables on the Rise 2018." *Environment Oregon*, 24 July 2018, environmentoregon.org/reports/orc/renewables-rise-2018.