



February 28, 2019

To: Representative Helm and Members of the House Energy & Environment Committee
From: Jaimes Valdez, Policy Manager, Spark Northwest
RE: Letter in Support of HB 2618 – Solar Energy Savings Bill

Dear Chair Helm and members of the House Committee on Energy & the Environment,

As a regional nonprofit organization focused on helping communities engage in locally-controlled clean energy, we are pleased to support HB 2618. Over the past 16 years, Spark Northwest (formerly named Northwest Sustainable Energy for Economic Development) has helped residential customers and small agricultural producers in Oregon make the switch to solar energy, wind power, and energy efficient equipment. Through education and technical assistance, we provide tools for people of all income levels to lower their energy costs and invest in their communities. In particular, over the past few years we have worked in partnership with the US Department of Agriculture with farmers in the Willamette Valley to install solar energy arrays to reduce their operating costs, and worked on community-based programs in southwest Oregon to educate about clean energy and efficiency opportunities. We have also partnered with community-based organizations in Portland to plan and implement neighborhood energy strategies using solar. Solar and energy storage technologies can together play a key role in local resilience and energy independence.

HB 2618 provides a needed tool to reduce the cost of solar equipment, and creates an incentive structure that is different than the previous Residential Energy Tax Credit program. In order to keep jobs in the solar industry, and continue to provide opportunity for people to participate in clean energy, there is a need to reduce the up-front costs of installations. The rebate program created through HB 2816 is available statewide, and fills a needed gap especially for people living in rural parts of Oregon that do not have access to the programs from the Energy Trust of Oregon.

We support the bill, and also support amendments that target the rebate incentives to those who most need access to the energy and cost savings provided by solar energy. As we continue to support solar energy incentives, it is critical that we create mechanisms so that low-income Oregonians can access the savings from clean energy. Through targeted education and income-sensitive incentive structures, we envision a bright future for solar energy in Oregon where all can benefit from renewable energy.

We encourage you to pass HB 2816 through committee, appreciate your consideration of these issues, and look forward to remaining engaged in this process.

Sincerely,

Jaimes Valdez

Policy Manager – Spark Northwest

jaimes@sparknorthwest.org

1402 3rd Ave, Suite 901
Seattle, WA 98101

sparknorthwest.org