

Testimony to the Joint Task Force on Resilient Efficient Buildings

Co-Chairs Senator Lieber and Representative Marsh and Members of the Task Force,

I write to you as the Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Climate Reality Project, Portland Chapter (CRPDX). We strongly encourage this task force to make recommendations to the 2023 Oregon Legislative Session reflective of the crisis Oregon faces due to the escalating impact of the consequences of climate change. Strong legislation focused on resilient and efficient buildings *and* the elimination of natural gas (i.e. methane)— via full electrification and improved weatherization and efficiency— in new and existing homes, businesses, and public institutions is needed to begin to turn this crisis into opportunities. These opportunities include improving public health, cleaning our air and water, providing good paying union jobs, demonstrating leadership to our nation and the world that we have the leadership and resources to fight this crisis, and providing a basis for Oregonian’s devastated by extreme heat, drought, erratic weather, and wildfires to have hope for our collective future. This legislation also needs to be designed with environmental justice in mind: this transition must be made affordable and available to low income people and renters.

Thank you for your commitment to this effort throughout the summer. I have been encouraged by your dedication to Oregon’s resilient future and your dedication to see this process through.

Buildings are the second highest source of climate pollution in Oregon and especially with the rapid growth of new construction (accounting for 25 – 30% of building stock by 2050), addressing the type of materials used, and how we build, heat, and cool our buildings will have a significant impact on our GHG emissions.

Given the recent passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest and most comprehensive climate legislation in our nation’s history, now is the time for Oregon to take advantage of the benefits of adopting clean, renewable energy in our homes and businesses. These benefits include ([The Inflation Reduction Act Delivers Affordable Clean Energy for Oregon](#)):

LOWER ENERGY COSTS: The IRA makes it more affordable for Oregon families to purchase energy efficient appliances, make repairs to their homes, and save money on their utility bills, through:

- Rebates of 50-100% of the cost of installing new electric appliances, including super-efficient heat pumps, water heaters, clothes dryers, stoves, and ovens. In Oregon, hundreds of thousands of low- and moderate-income households are eligible.
- Rebates for households to make repairs and improvements in single-family and multi-family homes to increase energy efficiency.
- Local clean energy production for homes and businesses:
 - Tax credits covering 30% of the costs to install solar panels and battery storage systems, make home improvements that reduce energy leakage, or upgrade heating and cooling equipment. No income limits apply. For solar, projections

estimate that over 75,000 additional Oregon households will install rooftop panels as a result.

- Tax credits covering 30% of the costs of community solar projects—owned by local businesses that sign up families to save on their electric bills—with additional bonus credits of 20% for projects at affordable housing properties and 10% for projects in low-income communities.
- The IRA also provides funds for investment in updated transmission infrastructure (the grid) especially in rural communities (section 22004) This investment is essential in Oregon both because our cleaner, healthier future entails increased electric demand from additional buildings and electric vehicles, and because transmission infrastructure must be upgraded to handle variable capacity from solar and wind energy.
- Grants to help state and local governments adopt the latest building energy codes, which would save the average new homeowner in Oregon 5.1% on their utility bills.

GOOD-PAYING JOBS: In 2021, there were already 53,869 Oregon workers employed in clean energy jobs. The IRA will expand these opportunities, bringing an estimated \$1.2 billion of investment in large-scale clean power generation and storage to Oregon between now and 2030. It provides an historic set of tax credits that will create jobs across solar, wind, storage, and other clean energy industries. These credits include bonuses for businesses that pay a prevailing wage, benefiting Oregon workers and building a clean energy future in America.

DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING: Manufacturers employ 187,300 workers in Oregon. The IRA will help us make the technologies of the future at home—supporting local economies and strengthening supply chains. The IRA will boost U.S. manufacturing of clean energy and transportation technologies, as well as investments for a new Advanced Industrial Facilities Deployment Program to position America to lead the growing global market for clean steel, aluminum, cement, and more.

SMALL BUSINESS: Oregon has 396,925 small businesses, representing 99.4% of all businesses in the state, the IRA will help them save money. Commercial building owners can receive a tax credit up to \$5 per sf to support energy efficiency improvements that deliver lower utility bills. Other programs that benefit small businesses include tax credits covering 30% of the costs of installing solar power and of purchasing clean trucks and vans for commercial fleets.

The benefits of the IRA are significant, and we encourage this task force to take full advantage of the opportunities before us. The above points are all relevant to this task force’s mandate to put forth legislation furthering the resilience and efficiency of Oregon’s buildings. At the same time, the IRA is full of compromises to fossil fuel industries, provides funding for unproven climate solutions, and does not adequately address the pressing climate concerns of communities impacted the most by the pollution and health concerns caused by fossil fuel industries. The [Climate Justice Alliance, IRA Factsheet](#) details the strengths, weaknesses, missed opportunities, and threats of this legislation. Examples relevant to this task force include:

- The IRA provides funding of biogas, biomass, and biofuels. These energy sources detract from needed food production and allow harmful industrial agricultural practices such as factory farming. These fuels are not emission free and incentivize the continuance of gas infrastructure.
- The IRA provides incentives for building energy upgrades including appliances and energy systems. Most low-income families cannot pay the costs upfront, excluding this demographic from these advantages.
- The definition of renewable energy for buildings does not exclude biofuels or hydrogen for residential energy needs. Again, these fuels are not emission free, prolong health and safety hazards, and incentivize the continuance of gas infrastructure.

Oregon's legislative and policy response to the IRA will largely determine how federal dollars are spent to combat climate change here at home. We can steer these funds to real climate solutions, benefiting all sectors of our economy, and avoid investments in false solutions that have the very real potential of increasing emissions and delaying action on technologies and practices already proven to increase clean renewable energy and decrease GHG emissions.

The natural beauty of our state reflects a long legacy of protecting our planet and our natural resources. Support of strong environmental policy, such as 100% Clean Energy by 2040, reflects our state's commitment to ensuring that our children and our children's children inherit a world that is safe and habitable. We believe climate change is an existential crisis threatening that future. The Legislative Committee of CRPDX supports policies to phase out fossil fuels, and effect the rapid and just adoption of clean, renewable energy sources to reduce the burdens of air and water pollution and global warming and protect our natural environment and public health.

We urge you to make the strongest possible recommendations to fight the climate crisis and support a Just Transition for Oregonians.

Thank you,

Karen Harrington
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
Climate Reality Project, Portland Chapter