



February 2, 2021

Chair Pam Marsh
Co-Vice Chair David Brock Smith
Co-Vice Chair Ken Helm
House Energy & Environment Committee
900 Court Street NW
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 2475, Relating to Public Utilities

Dear Chairman Marsh, Co-Vice Chair Brock Smith, Co-Vice Chair Helm, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association (OMEU) is made up of eleven municipally-owned and operated electric utilities. As consumer-owned utilities (COUs) we are directly accountable to the people we serve through our city councils and local governing boards.

Initially, OMEU had not intended to provide testimony on HB 2475 since, as proposed, this bill would just affect investor-owned utilities. However, in light of the testimony of Mr. Jim Kreider, who suggested that this bill be expanded to include COUs, we thought it might be useful to submit this written testimony to explain why OMEU would not support such an amendment.

Our history of local control has created positive climate, equity, and economic outcomes tailored to the communities we serve. COU governing boards already have the authority to institute a low-income rate if they opt to. For example, the City of Ashland has had a program in place since the 1970s that applies a 30% discount to the electric, water and sewer bills of seniors and the disabled who at or below the Federal poverty guideline.

Ashland provided a briefing about their program to the 2018 Low Income Utility Program Working Group, which was convened by the Department of Housing & Community Services, the Public Utility Commission (PUC), and the Department of Energy. As noted in other testimony in support of HB 2475, the Working Group recommended that similar authority also be provided to the PUC, which regulates investor-owned utilities.

HB 2475 is permissive. It merely allows the PUC to consider differential energy burdens on low-income customers and other economic, social equity or environmental justice factors that affect affordability. This is authority that COUs already have; no additional authority is necessary to include COUs.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Joly
Director

1201 COURT ST. NE, SUITE 102 • SALEM, OREGON 97301 • (971) 600-6976 • E-MAIL: jenniferjoly@omeu.org