



February 2nd, 2021

To: House Committee on Energy and Environment

RE: Oregon House Bill 2475, Energy Affordability

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Helm, and members of the Committee,

Formed in 2001, the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) is an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations with representation from African, African American, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic communities in Oregon. CCC works to improve outcomes for communities of color through policy analysis and advocacy, environmental justice, culturally-appropriate data and research, and leadership development in communities of color.

We wholeheartedly support the passage of House Bill 2475. This bill will directly address the disproportionately high energy burden faced by low-income communities of color throughout the state of Oregon and will also create opportunities for these communities to meaningfully participate in the regulatory processes that impact them. Nobody should be forced to forego essential items and services, such as food, medicine, water, or electricity because they cannot afford them.

While energy burden has long been a persistent issue experienced by Oregonians, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated energy insecurity among low-income households throughout the country and in our communities. A recent study found that “low-income Black and Hispanic households were especially vulnerable to energy insecurity, as were households with small children or members who relied on electronic medical devices, and those with inefficient housing conditions.”¹ The pandemic has highlighted the economic and health disparities faced by marginalized communities and communities of color, making it apparent that swift action is needed to alleviate financial burdens and provide relief to those who need it most.

HB 2475 allows the Public Utility Commission the authority to consider these financial burdens in rate structures and is a clear, long-term solution to reducing disproportionately high energy costs. Further, providing resources and opportunities for these customers to participate in rulemaking processes will help build a more equitable, accessible energy system. We are proud to be part of the coalition working to pass this policy and strongly urge a “yes” vote on HB 2457.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nikita Daryanani".

Nikita Daryanani, Climate and Energy Policy Manager, Coalition of Communities of Color

¹ <https://phys.org/news/2021-01-covid-energy-insecurity-low-income-americans.html>

