

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Re: SB 784 – CONCERN Regarding Sections 2 and 3

Dear Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and members of the committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on SB 784.

Resiliency – Section 2

It is unclear why legislation is being introduced to provide for recovery of additional ‘resiliency’ investments by electric utilities. The Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) mission statement (as quoted below) already ensures that Oregon utility customers have access to “reliable” utility services, and that those services are provided in a prudent and cost-effective manner. The OPUC’s 2020 strategic plan includes enforcement of existing reliability rules, proactively monitoring emerging risks, and adapting to new best practices (page 5, <https://www.oregon.gov/puc/about-us/Documents/2020-Strategic-Plan.pdf>). The Governor’s 2021-2023 budget already includes funding for the OPUC to ensure “Staff actively engages with utilities on issues of seismic resilience, cybersecurity, and wildfire mitigation to ensure appropriate investments are made to protect utility assets, minimize risk to the public, and ensure uninterrupted service to ratepayers.” (page 128, <https://www.oregon.gov/puc/forms/Forms%20and%20Reports/2021-2023%20GB%20Final.pdf>)

The Oregon Public Utility Commission’s mission statement (stated on their website):

To ensure Oregon utility customers have access to safe, reliable and high-quality utility services at just and reasonable rates. This is being done through robust and thorough analysis and independent decision-making conducted in an open and fair process.

Resiliency is a key element of reliability. If current utility law in Oregon does not allow for recovery of prudent and cost-effective resiliency investments - that should be fixed. However, if this is the case, it should be fixed for all utility services, not just electric. During the recent widespread power outages in Oregon, electricity customers were rightly concerned. However, based on social media posts, the real panic began to set in when local water utilities issued boil water alerts and warned of potential interruptions in services. If resiliency legislation is needed it must include all the utility services that the citizens of Oregon depend on.

Green Tariff Charges – Section 3

If a local government adopts a program for its residents under Section 3 of the legislation, that may cause resiliency issues on the utilities grid. Please ensure that costs to mitigate those resiliency issues are not charged to all ratepayers under Section 2 of the legislation, but are included in the cost of the voluntary local government program under Section 3.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sean Borgerson – Utility Customer