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To: Members of the House Committee On Energy and Environment
From: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Oregon Interfaith Power & Light

Re: **EMO/OIPL supports HB 2021**

March 22, 2021

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

Through eight direct service programs and a membership of 15 denominations and over 150 congregations and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) serve hundreds of thousands of Oregonians across the state. Our programs have become more needed than ever in the last year due to icestorm-related power outages, climate change-fueled wildfires, and the Covid pandemic and subsequent recession. These crises have exacerbated pre-existing environmental and economic injustices in the communities our programs serve.

As hundreds of EMO/OIPL supporters proclaimed at our March 11 day of action, **EMO/OIPL supports HB 2021, the 100% Clean Energy for All Act, because it prepares us for a post-Covid future with more resilient energy, less pollution, and a more justly compensated, more local workforce.**¹

With this bill, we have the opportunity to increase local community ownership of energy, job opportunities and economic development, and to improve the health and safety of communities throughout the state. Globally, the burning of fossil fuels was responsible for 20% of deaths in 2018, and we know that pollution from facilities like gas-fired power plants leads to worse outcomes from Covid-19. **By setting clear targets for cleaning up Oregon's electricity, we can seize the opportunity of clean energy to help rebuild from today's many crises, while centering frontline communities facing the brunt of these crises, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities, low-income communities, Tribes, and rural and coastal communities.**

We support the -1 amendment and believe that it could be even stronger to maximize benefits in our state. The labor standards in the -1 amendment will ensure clean energy projects pay the prevailing wage and provide good benefits and reserve opportunities for apprenticeships. We hope that future amendments strengthen these standards by ensuring that a percentage of workers come from underrepresented communities.

The bill also requires consideration of community-based energy projects, such as solar plus storage, that increase energy independence, affordability, and disaster-resilience. Increasing numbers of EMO/OIPL members are expressing interest in solar and solar plus storage systems,

¹ *EcoFaith Recovery*, "Sound the Alarm, March 11 Global Day of Action," March 15, 2021, video, 2:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H22Lt_5_OY0.

and we hope that future amendments also prioritize expanding access to community-based energy.

As has been rightly pointed out, this energy transition will not be free, and EMO agrees that economic justice needs to be a priority alongside creation justice.² **We support HB 2021 because it meaningfully prioritizes economic justice for all, and especially for those traditionally sidelined by our economic system.** First, as stated in last Wednesday's informational hearing, decarbonizing the power sector is not expensive. In fact, decarbonizing our energy grid will save the state (and particularly environmental justice communities) millions through avoided healthcare costs and disaster recovery costs. Second, the bill incorporates important off-ramps to protect ratepayers from spikes on their energy bills as a result of this mandate and associated programs. And finally, the labor standards in HB 2021 ensure a just wage and good benefits for workers, which is a key component of economic justice.

With its focus on benefitting nonhuman creation and under-resourced communities, **HB 2021 represents a significant milestone in our collective journey toward a society that reveres creation, cares for the dispossessed, and loves justice.** This bill will ensure that communities neglected in the fossil fuel economy will benefit from the global transition to 100% clean energy, which is already underway in the 18 states and 2 territories with existing 100% clean power commitments. As you heard last Wednesday, the most important year to take bold climate action is *this* year. **Therefore, we urge you to lend your support to HB 2021, for the sake of a healthier, cleaner and more just Oregon.**

We hope and pray your legislative deliberations maintain focus on caring for Oregon's frontline communities and our natural environments, and we pray for your health and safety in this time of pandemic. Know that your gatherings are covered in our prayers as you represent us and make decisions that shape our collective future.

Sincerely,

Cherice Bock, *Creation Justice Advocate*
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Oregon Interfaith Power & Light

² Cf. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, "Statement of Social Principles and Concerns," last revised 2012, https://emoregon.org/pdfs/Public_Policy/EMO_Statement_of_Social_Principles_rev2012.pdf.