



Native American Youth and Family Center

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April 21, 2021

To: Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

RE: House Bill 2475 – Support

My name is Rebecca Descombes, I am Inupiat originally from Utqiagvik, Alaska and I serve as the Health & Environment Policy Coordinator at the Native American Youth & Family Center (NAYA) here in Portland. NAYA's wraparound programs directly serves over 2,000 individual Native American youth, adults, and Elders each year and impacts the lives of over 10,000 Native Americans living in Portland's growing community.

One of the critical services we offer our community are housing and energy services. Over the past 10+ years, these services have been aimed at the stabilization and prosperity of those in our community. Our energy department has been working at capacity serving hundreds of clients and continue to provide critical resources to those in need.

House Bill 2475 would allow public utilities to provide financial assistance for organizations such as NAYA to assist low-income residential customers and those who are members of environmental justice communities. As you all might know, families throughout Oregon are spending more time in their homes given the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, within Native families and communities, multiple families are and have been living together due to loss of homes, jobs, and sources of income. These impacts contribute to an increase of monthly usage on their energy bills. Often, multi-family homes only have one source of income that can go towards utility bills.

Within our community, families have different levels of income and wealth and they feel the effects of their energy burdens differently. We know that this issue is not only isolated to the Native American community, but to all communities in Oregon. With financial burdens impacting our families, the Native American Youth and Family Center supports the passage of House Bill 2475 and urge you to do the same.

Thank you,

Rebecca Descombes
Health & Environment Policy Coordinator
Native American Youth & Family Center