



www.RogueClimate.org || PO Box 1980, Phoenix, OR 97535 || 541-301-9204

22 April 2021

Dear Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment,

My name is Jess Grady-Benson, I am the South Coast Energy Justice Organizer at Rogue Climate, an environmental justice organization with offices in Coos Bay and Phoenix, Oregon. Our work includes collaborating with local governments to pass clean energy plans, developing energy efficiency programs that help people in Southern Oregon and the South Coast save money on energy bills while also creating local jobs, running a fire relief center for our neighbors displaced by the Almeda Fire, and much more.

Rogue Climate urges you to vote yes on House Bill 2475 A as it currently stands and move it forward to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation. Please do not adopt the “-A11” amendments, which would defeat a major purpose of this bill by substantially limiting intervenor funding for environmental justice stakeholders and existing Public Utility Commission (PUC) intervenors like the Citizens’ Utility Board.

This bill would benefit our rural communities who are the most energy burdened in Oregon according to the Oregon’s Biennial Energy Report. In 2018, 40%-50% of Coos County households were energy burdened and that number has undoubtedly risen during the COVID19 economic crisis.¹ Additionally, the proposed intervenor funding would help ensure that rural communities across Oregon are not left out of the conversations at the PUC.

In the last year, Rogue Climate has worked with families, many latinx and spanish-speaking, to help find resources for utility bill support. Many of these families have been impacted by the fire or have lost their jobs and work hours due to Covid19, and each month utility bills they cannot afford, add up. This can lead to a slippery slope. One in five customers shut-off from utility service face homelessness.²

1

<https://www.oregon.gov/energy/Data-and-Reports/Documents/BER-Chapter-7-Protecting-Consumers.pdf>

2

<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2020/07/31/extend-statewide-moratorium-utility-disconnections-pandemic/5547502002/>



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While supporting these families, we have learned that there are very few services that assist people with their utility bills. Some only offered support one time only. Some run by service organizations that were overwhelmed by the vast need for support, could not call back for months, or had very long application processes that were not offered in other languages. The PUC needs tools to help low-income families who are struggling to pay their energy bills.

The Energy Affordability act or HB 2475 is a necessary step towards ensuring that no one in rural Oregon or across the state is having to choose between putting dinner on the table or keeping their heat on. By passing HB 2475, we can help people make sure community members are only paying their fair share for their energy bills and provide stability so that they can cope with crises and contribute to their communities. Passing this bill will change lives for the better.

We urge you to support the Energy Affordability Bill (HB 2475 A) as is and move this critical bill forward to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation.

Sincerely,
Jess Grady-Benson
South Coast Energy Justice Organizer

Rogue Climate
243 S 2nd St
Coos Bay, OR 97420