

Dear President Beyer, Vice President Findley, and committee members,

My name is Elvira Josafat. I live in Washington County in the small town of Gales Creek. I am a mother of four, three boys and one girl, and my husband and I work very hard to move our family forward. Currently, I am working with Adelante Mujeres assisting with small business navigation and worker relief that the State of Oregon is offering. In my free time, I am a coordinator at a food bank in the city of Forest Grove. These all allows me to deeply understand the needs in our communities.

I am here in support of HB 2475 - Energy Affordability. During the pandemic, our low-income residents in Oregon fight to make ends meet. Energy bills have continued to rise, leaving families with the harsh decision of paying the utility bill or buy food. This causes people to become more and more in debt. At the same time, utilities need tools to help manage mounting past-due bills. The legislature must act to allow for flexible rate structures that relieve energy burden and protect all ratepayers long-term from widespread cost increases.

In this bill, the state Public Utility Commission will be given authority to allow utilities to provide rate designs, such as discounts, that help reduce energy burden for low-income or other under-served customers. It also allows organizations who represent the people most impacted by energy burden to be able to access funding to participate in regulatory processes in the same manner as other broad customer groups like the Citizens' Utility Board.

In the place I live, it gets really cold in the winter and we need to use a lot of energy to warm our home, which causes our energy bills to be costlier and costlier. We use the fireplace, yet it is not sufficient to warm the entire home. My neighbors do this as well because they cannot afford having a higher energy bill come in, yet we all know the fireplace is not enough to warm us up. I hope HB 2475 will pass to help my neighbors and I afford the energy bills.

Thank you all for your giving me the opportunity to testify. Please vote in favor of HB 2475.