

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

As a retiree here on the South Coast, I see the effects of the pandemic shut down on the less fortunate all around me. Coos Bay has always been a blue collar community, but things are worse than ever.

HB 2475 will help South Coast families afford their power bills supporting families with lower incomes who most need the help.

As a folk musician, I have the privilege of donating fiddle lessons to some disadvantaged students. One of these families lost their apartment and had to set up a shed in the woods to live in. If families had access to low cost utilities, it would allow them to live with dignity in a real home, with lights, heat and running water. Americans should be able to afford these as a minimum standard of living.

Researchers from the Indiana University O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs analyzed the results of a nationally representative survey of 2,381 adults below the federal poverty line. Conducted in April and May 2020, the survey allowed researchers to study energy insecurity during both normal circumstances and in the early months of the COVID 19 pandemic. Sanya Carley, research co author says... We already knew that certain populations were at a higher risk of not being able to pay an energy bill or having their power cut off, but our research demonstrates that COVID 19 made the problem much worse. Many people who were struggling to meet their basic energy needs before the pandemic were the same people who were more likely to get the virus, more likely to experience economic hardship because of the virus and less likely to receive a stimulus check that could have helped them pay their energy bills.

Thank you Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Brock Smith, Vice Chair Helm and members of the Committee for supporting Energy Affordability, HB 2475.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sordyl