



CITY OF

PORTLAND, OREGON

Ted Wheeler, Mayor
Carmen Rubio, Commissioner
Dan Ryan, Commissioner
Jo Ann Hardesty, Commissioner
Mingus Mapps, Commissioner

February 1, 2021

Representative Pam Marsh, Chair
House Energy and Environment Committee
900 Court St. NE, HR D
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland strongly supports HB 2475, the Energy Affordability Act. Advancing a full, just and equitable decarbonization of Oregon's energy sector is one of the City of Portland's top priorities this session. Addressing energy affordability for vulnerable Oregonians in a structural way is critical. HB 2475 is led by frontline community and environmental justice organizations and we are proud to lend our full support behind their leadership.

In June 2020, City Council passed the Climate Emergency Declaration, which establishes a goal for Portland to meet 100 percent of the community's electric energy needs through renewable energy resources by 2030. HB 2475 is a foundational piece in our collective work to decarbonize Oregon's utility sector.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic catastrophe it is more important than ever to address the economic insecurity faced by Oregonians all over the state, rural and urban. Energy utility costs are the second largest housing expense for most low-income households, after their rent or mortgage. HB 2475 provides the Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) with the authority to address energy cost burden for low-income ratepayers through differentiated utility energy rates. While the Energy Affordability Act does not dictate a specific rate structure, it provides a framework to engage in the ratemaking and customer classification process.

HB 2475 will particularly help renters, who do not have the same opportunities to save money through energy efficiency measures that are available to homeowners. For renters in Oregon, utility rate relief or targeted programs to reduce their energy burden can make a meaningful difference. For low-income housing providers, reduction in utility bills allows them to keep those housing units affordable into the future. The housing crisis is a reality in cities around the state, and communities need a new set of policy tools to address the role of utility costs.

In November 2018, Portland voters overwhelmingly supported the creation of the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund. The fund will be making investments in non-profit-led community programs and projects that reduce carbon emissions and deliver benefits to low-income households and communities of color in Portland. Utility programs that help identify and qualify low-income customers could be instrumental in supporting PCEF and are complementary to the program's goals.

Importantly, HB 2475 also removes barriers and increases opportunities for organizations that represent people of color, environmental justice communities and other Oregonians vulnerable to energy cost burden to engage in Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) proceedings. Smaller organizations, from both urban and rural communities, do not currently have the staff and legal resources available to advocate for their constituents and wider access to utility intervenor funds is needed. The Energy Affordability Act identifies environmental justice communities and their needs across the state in both urban and rural areas. This is another key element to inclusive and just public policy that HB 2475 addresses.

We urge you to support a more equitable and fair utility structure and to provide community organizations the tools to be effective advocates at the Oregon Public Utility Commission. This bill has been many years in development. As we look to transformative changes to our energy systems in Oregon, it is important that we protect the most vulnerable Oregonians from regressive impacts and deliver benefits of a clean energy economy equitably. The City of Portland urges your support of HB 2475.

Sincerely,



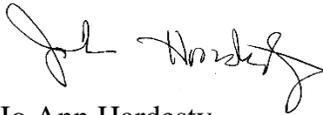
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