



To: Members of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment
From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network
Date: February 1, 2021

RE: Support for HB 2475

Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 2475. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon Conservation Network's strong support to pass this legislation giving the PUC authority to utilities to provide more affordable energy to low income ratepayers.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. OCN is a coalition of 34 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations, the Oregon Environmental Council being one. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

HB 2475 is unfinished business from the previous legislative session and the COVID pandemic has shown how desperately needed this legislation truly is. With joblessness leading to declining incomes, and people spending more time at home, thousands of Oregonians are spending an increasing amount of their income on energy bills, making it harder to purchase food and other necessities. HB 2475 gives utilities another tool in the toolbox to help people have more affordable energy bills and to more flexibly deal with past due bills.

Rather than defining a fair price of energy based on what is broadly considered affordable, HB 2475 will enable utilities to offer discounts to Oregon households that are energy burdened based on the percentage of their income that they are spending on their energy bills. This more equitable approach to how utilities set prices is supported by PUC staff, utilities and traditional regulatory stakeholders. In Oregon this crucial shift in how energy prices could be set will most benefit Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities who are disproportionately energy burdened, as well as residents of rural southeastern Oregon. HB 2475 brings much needed equity and fairness to Oregon communities who have been struggling and who have been historically underserved.



HB 2475 also brings new voices, especially those usually least represented in public processes—from across the state into decision-influencing spaces for the resources, rates, and programs of Oregon investor-owned utilities.

As Oregon heads into a clean energy future it is imperative that we make it a just transition, which means ensuring Oregonians will be able to afford their energy needs now and into the future.

The Oregon Conservation Network strongly supports the passage of HB 2475 and we urge the members of this Committee to do the same.

Sincerely,

Julia DeGraw
Oregon Conservation Network
Oregon League of Conservation Voters Coalition Director