

Feb 1st, 2021

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

My name is Jessica Rojas, I live and work in inner NE Portland, where I was raised and both of my parents reside in this geography as well (mother owns a home in Concordia and father lives in low income apartments in Hollywood). I identify as a mixed race Chicana and work for the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods. I am speaking from my own personal and communal experience in this letter.

I support HB 2475 as it will help Oregon families afford their energy bills through lower rates for residential ratepayers with lower incomes who most need the relief.

HB 2475 will allow organizations who represent low-income and environmental justice impacted communities in participating in decisions about energy that affect their lives. It will ensure that the people who know best how to address the challenges of their everyday lives, are a part of shaping the solutions.

HB 2475 would support homes like my mother's, as she is a low income homeowner. Heating costs have been a barrier consistently for over 30 years, and she has relied on firewood when we can. This means our entire home is not warm, just the living room, and we are dependent on access to finding affordable firewood. As a senior who works FT on a fixed income and amidst a changing economy, HB 2475 would assist her in keeping her home warm, her bills affordable and the ability to age in her own home.

As a young person, our energy bills were such a burden, that much of my life has been lived knowing that energy is to be consumed only when needed, as having your power turned off occasionally, was impactful to my mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. I cannot imagine how difficult this could be for those families who are dependent on internet access for work and online learning, in addition to a world that is requiring electricity access, just to participate in decision making processes like this.

Having access to electricity when needed, especially during a time when it is essential to all life duties of civic participation- is critical to our state's future and well-being.

Lastly, when I think of how much of Oregon's energy is consumed, who is impacted the most by how that energy is produced (the people and the rest of the chain of life)- those who depend on the essential services of the earth, from fisheries, vegetation, to minerals- all of these resources are impacted by energy production- even hydropower. When all of our natural resources, their availability and accessibility, are impacted long term by our energy choices and practices- these impacts poor people and especially people of color, disproportionately.

From what I have learned, those in rural parts of Oregon, east of the Cascades, have exceptionally high heating/ air cooling needs, in areas that are fire prone, and have less

access to general assistance and opportunities that may exist in the Portland region. For those of us in Portland, we face high rent rates and economic hardships, that this HB could provide a safety net for.

Lastly but not least- I feel that the largest of these burdens are upon Native American Tribes, their members and descendants, who have lost access to the resources many of their Tribes ceded lands in exchange for the use of their future generations. The equity lens applied in this HB must be inclusive and beneficial to those communities in a way that may look different for other communities of color in Oregon, and include those not living in their sovereign lands.

So this HB must also benefit Tribal communities/ members as those whose natural resources are impacted by our energy choices and consumption practices. I urge you to support this bill as it can support low-income families and communities of color, if implemented with their input and consistent participation.

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

Sincerely,
Jessica Rojas, Northeast Portland