

February 1, 2021

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

I am Catherine Bax, a retired Physician Assistant, a member of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, a member of St Andrew Catholic Church in Portland and I want to help, however I can, to clean up and cool down our planet and to create a compassionate, equitable and just society. I am pretty sure that you, who have made a career of public service, have very similar goals.

House Bill 2475, the Oregon Affordability Act is a small but practical step that Oregonians can take towards a more compassionate, equitable and just Oregon.

For many Oregonians, utility bills are manageable. But for many other Oregonians the cost of heating their home, cooking their food, washing their clothes is insurmountable. Electricity, gas and water costs the same for a 2 or 3 bedroom house, whether your family's annual income is \$30,000 a year or \$230,000 a year. (Arguably it costs even more to heat your home if you are poor because your house is not well insulated).

A \$2300 annual utility bill (gas and electricity) for the \$130,000 or \$230,000 income household is manageable. A \$2300 utility bill for a poor household is an unreasonable cost to keep the heat and the lights on. Heat, lights water are not luxuries. At the St Andrew Church food pantry in NE Portland we cannot even begin to meet the need of families trying desperately to afford housing, food and electricity. A need that is a lot worse since the pandemic.

Please support the passage of House Bill 2475 which will give Oregon Public Utility Commission the authority to allow utilities to provide rate designs, such as discounts, that will help reduce the energy burden for poor Oregon families. This is not a question of charity, this is a question of justice.

Sincerely,

Catherine Bax, Physician Assistant (Retired)