



# Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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February 13, 2023

To: Chair Pam Marsh, Vice-Chair Emerson Levy, Vice-Chair Bobby Levy, and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

From: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Policy Manager, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)

Re: Support for HB 2534 – Statewide Energy Strategy

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CUB is a membership-based 501(c)3 nonprofit consumer advocacy developed in 1984 out of a citizens' initiative for consumer advocacy representation in utility matters in Oregon. CUB supports HB 2534 with the -1 amendment.

We agree that Oregon could benefit from statewide communication and alignment on energy policies, strategies, and programs. With this bill, Oregon has the potential to make progress toward our energy future a more efficient process and prevent duplicative or contradictory programs. Streamlining state agency energy work can make it easier for stakeholders, particularly community members, to participate.

Oregon's aggressive greenhouse gas emissions' reduction requirements require intentional and collaborative efforts and planning. They also require significant utility investment in equipment and infrastructure. These costs will pay off in later years with decreasing purchases of fossil fuels, decreasing or removing risk from future fuel price volatility, and reducing reliance on fossil fuel imports. However, without careful planning the decarbonization transition could widen existing energy inequities by leaving some customers on the hook for the costs of fossil fuel assets that are being phased out or no longer in use.

A statewide energy strategy also creates the opportunity to explore multiple pathways to collectively meet Oregon's energy goals and needs, such as studying options for cost-effective behavioral measures to support household and business energy efficiency efforts. Decarbonization and energy efficiency opportunities are available at the state and local government, and organizational level—collaboration could maximize these resources and distribute them more efficiently and equitably. Affordable housing requires affordable utilities. With a statewide, collaborative energy strategy, Oregon can plan for those most vulnerable to have a roof over their heads and help them maintain that housing by keeping utilities low with energy efficient buildings that have energy efficient appliances.

Oregon has strong carbon goals and clean energy standards. Planning is essential if we are going to meet these goals and standards affordably. It makes sense to look at energy plans and strategies that cut across individual utilities, sectors, and fuels. By working with the information and resources we already have available, we can do our best to estimate future costs for utility service and work to keep utility rates affordable for Oregonians.