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RE: Support for HB 3152

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy and Levy, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Alma Pinto and I am the Climate Justice Associate at Community Energy Project (CEP). CEP serves frontline communities that are disproportionately affected by the impacts of the climate crisis, including low-income households, BIPOC communities, seniors, and people with disabilities. We believe that everyone deserves a safe, healthy, and efficient home, regardless of income. I am writing in support of House Bill 3152. I strongly believe that this bill is critical for protecting low-income ratepayers from being further energy-burdened by the irresponsible continued expansion of the fossil fuel system in the midst of a climate emergency.

Utility customers in Oregon are currently shouldering the costs and risks of paying huge subsidies for new gas pipeline hookups and new gas appliances for other customers. This method of subsidizing gas expansion through customer rates unfairly burdens consumers. This is especially problematic for our low-income clients and other Oregonians who are already struggling to cover their rising costs of energy and other basic necessities.

This is why this piece of legislation is so important. It cuts unnecessary and harmful costs for fossil fuel subsidies from Oregonians' energy bills, and ensures that gas companies and their investors shoulder any financial costs and risks related to subsidizing the expansion of the gas system, not customers.

This is particularly important given that Oregon's Climate Protection Plan requires major emissions reductions from current levels, and every new customer gas utilities add will need to have their emissions fully offset.

Lastly, the best use of energy efficiency dollars is for weatherization and electrification solutions that benefit low-income customers the most. This includes heat pumps that provide both heating and cooling, and other true energy efficiency solutions. We need to prioritize these solutions and stop subsidizing gas appliances for new construction that lock customers into 20 years or more of gas, which is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing.

In conclusion, I urge you to support HB 3152. Oregon needs to move away from contributing to the climate emergency and take decisive actions towards reducing its impact. We must ensure that the cost of building a sustainable and equitable future is not borne by those who can least afford it. This bill is a crucial step in the right direction. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alma Pinto
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