



www.RogueClimate.org || PO Box 1980, Phoenix, OR 97535 || 541-301-9204

Coos Bay Office: 243 S. 2nd St. Coos Bay, OR 97420 || 541- 816-0758

Re: Rogue Climate Testimony regarding HB 3179,

Dear Chair Sosa, Vice-Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and Members of the House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 3179: the FAIR Energy Act.

Rogue Climate serves and works alongside Southern Oregon and South Coast communities most impacted by climate change, including low-income, rural, youth, and communities of color, by organizing for clean energy, sustainable jobs, and a healthy environment. We do so through leadership development, political education, and campaigns for policies that benefit our communities.

Far too many people in Oregon are struggling to pay their energy bills. Since 2021, the state's largest for-profit utilities have raised residential billing rates by nearly 50%. A [2024 ACEEE study](#) found that households that identify as low-income, African American, Latinx, or Native are more likely to be energy burdened and face a higher energy burden than the average household. Households in rural communities are also more likely to be energy burdened, with [30-39% of households](#) in Jackson and Coos county facing severe energy burdens while also earning [less than \\$15,060 per year](#). This can lead to a [crippling effect](#) on local communities and economies, since families have less disposable income to spend.

It is clear that Oregon must address the structural issues contributing to the energy affordability crisis. The FAIR Energy Act (HB 3179) is a crucial step in addressing these problems. The bill would allow state regulators to set energy utility rates at the lowest possible level, helping families avoid steep increases in energy bills. Additionally, it would move any rate increases outside of winter, when energy demand is highest, reducing the pressure on households during the coldest months. Loss of power during winter often forces families to rely on dangerous heating methods, such as generators or gas ovens, putting them at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning.

The increasing prevalence of extreme weather events further burdens community members in Southern Oregon and the South Coast, underscoring the need for energy affordability as climate change impacts continue. While serving as the service provider for the Community Heat Pump Deployment Program in Jackson County, the Rogue Climate team has heard first hand the stories of community members struggling to pay their utility bills. Many of the families we are serving have small children in the home and are facing the



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choice between using plug-in heaters to warm at night or sleep in a cold home to save money.

We have installed heat pumps in 29 single-family homes located in designated environmental justice communities in the past five months, which will increase efficiency and reduce bills for many families. However, the need continues to outweigh available resources, leaving countless families without an accessible solution to lower their energy bills while also staying warm, comfortable, and safe in their home. This is why the FAIR Energy Act is essential - to ensure that everyone has access to safe and affordable heating and cooling as the impacts of climate change continue to burden community members.

Utilities should be focused on providing essential services to meet community needs, rather than using ratepayer funds to block policies that protect residents from pollution and climate impacts. It is essential that we increase transparency, ensuring customers understand what they are paying for and what to expect from future changes in energy bills. The FAIR Energy Act allows utilities greater flexibility to use low-cost financing for necessary investments in the energy grid, keeping customer costs low. As we approach critical emissions reduction deadlines, the cost of a just transition will only rise, making it imperative that we act now.

Rogue Climate strongly supports HB 3179 as a necessary step toward creating a fairer, more resilient energy system for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Jess Grady-Benson, Organizing Director

Zöe Serrano, Legislative Coordinator



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