



February 21, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for House Bill 3179, Relating to public utilities.

Dear Chair Sosa, Vice Chairs Osborne and Chaichi, and other members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club Oregon and our 55,000 members and supporters, we strongly urge you to support HB 3179, the Fairness & Affordability in Residential (FAIR) Energy Act. This bill is a critical step toward ensuring that Oregonians can afford their energy bills and that our utility system operates with greater transparency and accountability.

Since 2021, the state's largest for-profit utilities have raised residential energy rates by nearly 50%, leaving many households facing energy insecurity as well as financial hardship. While there are assistance programs, they cannot provide for the current need and are underfunded. We need systemic solutions to prevent unfair rate increases and protect our most vulnerable communities. HB 3179 would provide an approach that makes energy more affordable, predictable, and transparent for all in the state.

The FAIR Energy Act empowers the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) to set rates at the lowest possible level which would in turn help households avoid sudden spikes in energy costs. Additionally, the bill allows utilities more flexibility to use affordable financing to fund necessary energy grid improvements while keeping customer costs low. HB 3179 limits how often utilities can raise rates, requiring an 18-month waiting period between major increases. Additionally, it prohibits rate hikes between November 1 and March 31, when energy usage is highest and families are most vulnerable to shutoffs. These measures ensure that households can better plan for their energy expenses and avoid financial crises caused by these unexpected increases.

Another benefit includes requiring utilities to inform customers about where their money is going with greater transparency. This transparency ensures that customers are not left in the dark about why their bills are increasing and gives them the information they need to hold utilities accountable if needed. Under HB 3179, the Oregon PUC will have greater authority to set the lowest rates possible for customers of for-profit utilities. Oregon cannot afford to continue down a path where energy costs become an increasing burden for the people that live here, especially those in more financially sensitive situations. HB 3179 provides necessary protections and reforms that will help ensure energy remains accessible, affordable, and fairly regulated.

The Sierra Club Oregon Chapter urges you to pass this bill to create a more just and equitable energy system for all Oregonians.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Bowes, Policy Strategist

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Bowes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.