

Submitter: Beth Poteet
On Behalf Of: 350PDX
Committee: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3179

Dear Chair Sosa, Vice-Chair Chaichi, Vice-Chair Osborne and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that Oregon is a place where all can thrive.

As a social worker, public health professional, and member of 350PDX living in Portland, I am writing to you today to express my support for HB 3179. For 15 years, I have worked alongside community-based organizations in Oregon serving community members who struggle to make ends meet. I saw this acutely during the COVID19 pandemic when essential workers had to make the difficult choice between staying home to take care of their and their family members' health or to go to work so that they would not lose their job or income. Thankfully, due to federal relief funds, these same organizations were able to pay for people's rent, food and utility bills so that they could protect their family's health and economic stability.

Although the pandemic has ended, it exposed the dangerous precipice that far too many straddle. In the U.S, nearly 60% of us cannot afford a \$400 emergency, creating impossible choices between paying for utilities, rent, food, healthcare, transportation, education, etc. Since 2021, for-profit utilities in Oregon have doubled their rates by nearly 50%! The FAIR Energy Act would prohibit winter utility rate hikes, increase transparency from utilities so that we, the customers, know what we're paying for, and give the Oregon Public Utility Commission more authority to set the lowest rates possible for customers of for-profit utilities.

We can do better to make sure that everyone in Oregon can afford to keep the lights on. Please vote yes on HB 3179 today.

Thank you for your consideration.

Beth Poteet, MSW