

February 20, 2025

House Committee on Commerce and Protection

RE: HB 3179 (Fair Energy Act)

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

My name is Marisol De La Torre, and I am the government relations and legislative advocate at Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA), a member-based alliance of over 20 urban and rural communities across the state of Oregon, representing thousands of people. We are a movement of frontline communities facing the brunt of environmental racism and climate change. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 3179 and its proposed amendment.

Right now, our communities are hit hard with high rent, high energy bills, and extreme weather events. But not everyone faces the same burden. During our 2020 statewide listening tour, many low-income and communities of color shared that they were forced to choose between paying rent and heating their homes. Unfortunately, that continues to be a tough decision they're facing today. No Oregonian should be faced with that decision.

Energy bills have surged over the years, and Oregon's largest for-profit utility corporations have **raised their rates by nearly 50% since 2021**,¹ with no end in sight. And they have seen **record profits**, while everyday Oregonians struggle. HB 3179 aims to address this problem by directing the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to consider the overall economic impact on ratepayers.

The bill would let the PUC set the lowest possible rates for utility bills. The proposed amendment would require an 18-month gap between the effective dates of residential rate increases. And it would pause increases from November to March, during peak season. These protections would give families relief from rising energy costs, especially during harsh winters and extreme weather.

We have heard a lot from utilities about their inability to collect data. But our members have shared that their communities don't understand their energy bills and are frustrated

¹ This encompasses Oregon's three largest utilities: PGE, PacifiCorp, and Northwest Natural.

by the lack of transparency about the rate hikes and charges. We also heard last week from for profit utilities about their fears of insolvency but remember we've had **record disconnections** while utilities and their shareholders still made profits. We need a better balance. HB 3179 aims to fix this by adding provisions to ensure customers are centered in ratemaking decisions.

Oregonians are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living. By supporting HB 3179 the state legislature can support keeping utility costs low. The PUC has a legal mandate to provide just and reasonable rates under ORS 757.210.

I urge you to support HB 3179 and ensure energy justice for all Oregonians.

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