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March 26, 2025

House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection

**RE: HB 3792 Support**

Chair Rep. Sosa, Co-Chairs Rep. Chaichi, Rep. Osborne and Members of the Committee:

My name is Marisol De La Torre, and I am the government relations and legislative advocate for Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA), a member-based alliance made up of urban and rural nonprofits and their communities in the state of Oregon, representing thousands of people. I am writing to express our support for HB 3792, which will increase funding for the Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) to meet growing needs of our frontline community members.

OJTA represents frontline communities, including low-income, rural, BIPOC, and disabled folks, who experience climate change first and worst. From our work, and consistent with the positions we have taken with other bills being considered this Session, we know Oregon is experiencing an energy affordability crisis and cost of living crisis. Oregon's largest for-profit utility corporations have raised their rates by nearly 50%, with no end in sight. Rising energy costs are putting a strain on families, who are being forced to choose between paying their energy bills and meeting other basic needs like housing and food. Yet, the budget for energy assistance in the Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) has not increased. As a result, less than one in five people who qualify for low-income energy assistance cannot access it- and power disconnections have increased substantially.

Access to energy is critical, especially during extreme weather events. Under a Just Transition framework, addressing climate change isn't just about reducing climate pollution, but rather making communities more resilient to its impacts, and mitigating the harms to those already most disproportionately impacted. While utility-administered bill discount programs help ratepayers by lowering their monthly costs, they do not address the pressing issue of outstanding debt which puts them at risk of disconnection. In Oregon, energy customers can be disconnected for as little as \$50 of past-due energy bills. The Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) is a unique program because it helps Oregonians pay off their past-due bills, ensuring they stay connected to power.

On behalf of OJTA, I urge you to invest in HB 3792 that will strengthen the Oregon Energy Assistance Program and ensure that Oregonians have access to the support they need to cover their energy bills.



Thank you,

Marisol De La Torre  
Government Relations & Legislative Advocate  
Oregon Just Transition Alliance  
[Marisol@OJTA.org](mailto:Marisol@OJTA.org)