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On Behalf Of: Wallowa Resources
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

I am in full support of HB 2065, and HB 2066. As a rural resident in an area that experiences frequent power interruptions due to public safety power shut offs, weather events and wildfires, having a microgrid would be invaluable. These bills would help in realizing this goal.

These two bills will be a large step forward for microgrid policy and community backed energy projects in general. It opens the door for exploratory measures that will allow the PUC to help shape integration processes for large community energy projects such as the Wallowa County Microgrid.

HB2066 would ease constraints on power purchase agreement operation issues, lack of transparency around ownership models, and drastically low avoided-cost (buy back) rates. Moving forward with 2066 would allow decision making power for disconnection processes to local site operators and emergency management teams in addition to the PUC providing legal clarity and guidance on fair and equitable compensation and ownership models for locally produced energy or microgrid projects.

HB2065 is rooted on the energy planning side. Currently third-party engineering firms cannot be involved in a formal stamp or review of a project such as the Wallowa County microgrid. Also, interconnection can not involve third party entities, even though utilities hire third party assistance themselves. Essentially it leaves all formal review to be done by the utility provider only, which lends itself to biases and equity issues. HB2065 would allow third party contractors to play a larger role in engineering and interconnection. This removes bottlenecks and allows more projects to be built and integrated.