

**Testimony to the House Rules Committee
re: HB 3179-8**

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**Ben Brint, Senior Climate Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative, and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council support for HB 3179-8

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) and our thousands of members throughout the state, I write in strong support of HB 3179-8. This important legislation strengthens consumer protections and rate affordability oversight for Oregonians facing rising utility costs.

OEC supports HB 3179-8 for several reasons. First, **when high energy bills force Oregonians to choose between turning their heat on in the winter or paying their rent, that's not resilience.** High energy costs make us less resilient and can even turn deadly during extreme weather events like heat waves and arctic storms. This bill specifically requires utilities to conduct and include an analysis of the cumulative economic impact of proposed rate increases on residential ratepayers - **a critical step toward ensuring affordability.**

Second, **this bill provides necessary transparency and protection for consumers** by requiring the Public Utility Commission to balance the interests of utility investors and consumers when determining whether proposed rates are fair, just, and reasonable. The legislation's provision prohibiting rate increases from taking effect between November 1 and March 31 is particularly important for **protecting vulnerable Oregonians during winter months.**

Third, **Oregon's utility customers need relief from rapidly escalating costs.** HB 3179-8 addresses this by establishing a framework for multi-year rate plans and limiting how frequently utilities can request rate increases that subject their return on equity to review. The bill's provisions allowing for rate recovery bonds for certain expenditures would help spread costs over time, making them more manageable for consumers while still ensuring utilities can make necessary investments.

Fourth, **transparency is key to accountability.** By requiring utilities to provide annual reports on cost categories included in residential rates and anticipated rate adjustments, **this legislation ensures Oregonians will have clear information about what they're paying for and what changes to expect.**

HB 3179-8 represents a balanced approach that acknowledges utilities' need to recover costs while prioritizing the economic well-being of Oregon families. When utility bills consume an ever-growing portion of household budgets, it impacts not just individual families but our entire economy. This legislation takes important steps to ensure that rate increases are necessary, justified, and implemented with consideration for their real-world impact on Oregonians.

Oregon Environmental Council and our thousands of members throughout the state urge you to support HB 3179-8.

Sincerely,

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