



MyKel Johnson Testimony to Energy and Environment Committee 2.4.26 in Support of SB 1526

Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Brock-Smith, Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is MyKel Johnson, and I'm here on behalf of the Northwest Native Chamber.

We strongly support the proposal directing the Oregon Department of Energy to pursue the creation of an Oregon Energy and Resilience Infrastructure Fund.

The Northwest Native Chamber works every day to strengthen Tribal contractors and workforce pathways.

Our goal is to turn our communities into owners, employers and leaders of growth.

We focus on contractor readiness, small business growth, and creating clear pathways into family-wage jobs.

Through partnerships with Tribal governments and community organizations, we provide training and technical assistance.

We enable Tribal enterprises to compete for and successfully deliver major infrastructure and energy projects.

Through partnerships with Tribal governments and community organizations, we provide building performance certification opportunities to support healthy homes and invest into local workforce.

By coupling individualized business development with fully funded residential projects and work opportunities, business owners can engage with an ecosystem of support measures.

NWNC pairs fully funded education and training opportunities with mentorship and prioritizes building community within our growing network of emerging Native professionals.

Our cultural traditions teach us to take the long view, to sow now so we can reap later.

The bill before you today does exactly that. It won't cost the state.

But it will make sure that we are ready to move quickly when the time is right.

We are particularly encouraged by the emphasis on collaboration between ODOE, the Oregon Business Development Department, and a future nonprofit entity.

This is a structure that can attract and deploy capital at scale.

One that can catalyze growth by embedding workforce and contractor development are embedded into project financing from the start.

Done well, this approach can unlock durable economic benefits alongside energy and resilience outcomes.

It can enable growth in tribal and rural communities, parts of Oregon that are too often left behind.

We strongly support this proposal and urge your support as well. Thank you for your leadership and your time.