

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

Testimony on SB 1526 – Support

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Submitted by Lauren Link, State Policy Advisor

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Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Brock Smith, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1526, a bill that would benefit Oregonians by increasing access to affordable capital to fund energy and resilience projects that Oregon needs—habitat restoration, energy infrastructure, and community resilience projects.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a non-partisan, science-based organization that works in communities across the state, manages lands and waters in varied ecosystems, and partners with ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber, and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature.

TNC has a long history of working with community, agency, and tribal partners to conduct habitat restoration projects that re-establish natural processes that create sustainable habitats for wildlife and people; we have seen firsthand that maximizing resilience improvements and conserving our most sensitive ecosystems and productive working lands can also create good quality jobs.

Our Connecting Canopies program is a great example of this, where we work with partners to increase urban tree canopy, reduce heat island effect, and build out a green infrastructure workforce. TNC's robust fire partnership program is another, supporting healthy and resilient ecosystems and fire adapted communities by creating, training, and deploying a workforce that can increase the pace and scale of place-based prescribed fire treatments. This is why we are supporting SB 1526—we see this bill as a way to fund critical restoration projects, energy infrastructure, and resilience strategies that benefit people and nature.

Oregon has no shortage of plans, strategies, programs, and policies, including the most recent Oregon State Energy Strategy, the Natural and Working lands workforce needs study, and the Governor's Executive orders on climate resilience that point to strategies and recommendations on what and where we need to invest; yet we often don't have enough funds to do the work. SB 1526 outlines a sequential pathway that leverages public and private partnerships to fund investments that offer multiple benefits to Oregonians, our economy, and our environment.