ZERO Coalition Written Testimony in Support of HB 4080 – Balcony Solar
House Committee on Climate, Energy, and the Environment
February 6, 2026

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the Committee,

The ZERO Coalition is a statewide alliance committed to advancing clean, efficient, and equitable buildings in Oregon. Our Coalition is 55+ members strong and includes architects, builders, policymakers, utilities, non-profits, and industry stakeholders. Our mission is to accelerate the adoption of energy-efficient technologies and equitable clean energy solutions while ensuring safety, consumer protection, and long-term affordability.

The ZERO Coalition strongly supports HB 4080, which enables the safe deployment of small, plug-in "balcony solar" PV systems (≤1.2 kW) in Oregon, one these systems receive national and state safety review. These systems provide an immediate, equitable, and low-cost clean energy solution, particularly for renters and residents of multifamily housing who cannot access traditional rooftop solar.

We recognize the safety and technical concerns raised in opposition testimony, and we respectfully offer the following clarifications and counterpoints:

1. Safety Concerns Are Being Addressed

Opponents raise concerns about fire hazards, electrical shocks, and backfeeding. HB 4080 does not preclude safety, it only allows UL-listed systems installed per National Electrical Code (NEC) standards and Oregon-specific code requirements.

- Backfeeding risks are minimal for UL-certified systems. Built-in safety devices, combined with code-compliant installation, prevent significant hazard.
- Daisy chaining or circuit overload is a concern in any electrical system. Code provisions will include limits and requirements for dedicated circuits to mitigate risk.
- Emergency egress and fire access: Panels are small, lightweight, and portable. Installation guidelines will ensure balconies remain clear and safe for fire fighters and residents.

It is important to note that similar concerns exist for common household appliances, EV chargers, and portable generators, yet all are safely permitted under codes and standards. Balcony solar is no different and can be safely integrated using established electrical safety frameworks. Indeed, the bigger risk is not allowing regulators to develop safety standards, which

will in turn lead to unsanctioned system installation as this product becomes available in neighboring states.

2. Equity and Access

Opposition testimony emphasizes technical risks but does not address the equity gap HB 4080 closes:

- 37% of Oregon households are renters, most of whom cannot install rooftop solar.
- 50–58% of these renters are cost-burdened, with utility costs being a key contributor.
- Balcony solar provides low-cost, fast-payback clean energy (~$3/W with ~5-year payback), allowing renters to directly reduce energy bills while contributing to a cleaner grid.
- Wider scale adoption of the technology will lead to price drops, as we have seen with other technologies like flat screen TV, improving the value proposition.

Failing to allow these systems continues to deny renters access to affordable renewable energy, exacerbating energy inequities. The average household can save 8 - 15 percent on their energy bill, this is a meaningful savings for an energy burdened household.

3. Proven Technology

Opposition witnesses cited safety and unfamiliarity concerns. However, balcony solar is widely deployed and scalable in Europe, and Utah will allow code compliant self-installation of systems up to 1.2 kW upon UL-certification. Dozens of other states are also considering parallel legislation, Oregon risks being left behind, or worse without state safety standards.

- Differences between Europe and the U.S. (voltage and wiring standards) are acknowledged, but the combination of UL standards, NEC compliance, and Oregon-specific code provides a robust framework for safe adoption.
- The technology is portable, renter-friendly, and flexible, suitable for multifamily units, single-family homes with limited rooftop access, patios, or sun-exposed areas.
- The government's role is to establish a reasonable safety framework, not to babysit individual households as they adopt the latest technologies.

4. Process & Regulatory Safeguards

Opponents argue that legislation is premature. HB 4080 is designed as a responsible, regulatory-forward approach:

- Systems must be UL-listed and installed per NEC standards.
- Oregon code will be updated to address plug-in solar, ensuring oversight and safety.
- By codifying the framework now, Oregon provides clarity for manufacturers, installers, and consumers, while enabling rapid deployment in alignment with established safety standards.

This approach balances safety, regulatory compliance, and rapid access for Oregonians without creating loopholes for unregulated installation.

5. Economic & Grid Benefits

- Increases access to clean energy, reducing peak load pressure on the grid. This in turn lowers costs because we can get more use out of the grid that ratepayers already paid for.
- Supports local labor and installation jobs without overburdening building owners or tenants.
- Expands energy choice and encourages innovation in equitable solar solutions.
- Allows people to invest the energy savings into other productive activities and fulfill household needs.

HB 4080 represents a safe, low-cost, and equitable expansion of renewable energy access in Oregon. By leveraging UL certification, NEC standards, and Oregon-specific code, we can deploy these systems without compromising safety or emergency response.

The ZERO Coalition urges the Committee to support HB 4080 and enable Oregon residents to participate in the clean energy transition today.

Sincerely,

ZERO Coalition