

Submitter: Juno Suarez
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4076

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Levy and Gamba, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4076 with the -1 amendment.

PDX Solar is a volunteer-run, member-funded energy education nonprofit.

This bill as amended makes a small technical fix to the existing regulatory framework making it easier to get more value from our existing energy facilities by making it easier to upgrade and re-energize existing facilities where there is extra grid capacity. This will allow for additional energy production without triggering costly grid upgrades. On balance, we expect it to result in lower bills for ratepayers. Additionally, by encouraging upgrading existing facilities, it will avoid land use conflicts and shorten siting time to accelerate time to power and meet Oregon's growing energy needs. This helps avoid the rolling blackout scenarios predicted by some modeling.

Importantly, the option to upgrade existing facilities benefits many small energy producers such as hydro facilities operated by irrigation districts and PUDs. In the status quo, projects to re-energize dams are often unfeasible because they would trigger lengthy siting and permitting requirements. However, research from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory[1] shows that adding batteries to dams can significantly reduce operating and maintenance costs and increase dam lifespan while benefiting water quality and wildlife habitat.

This bill is also forward-looking by reducing the potential for blighted brownfield sites at thermal power plants which are end-of-life or no longer economic to operate. This bill adds needed flexibility to generator operators, increasing the value of their generating assets, allowing upgrades to new technology, and increasing the economic efficiency, reliability, and resource adequacy of our power system as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,
Juno Suarez
Founder
PDX Solar

[1]: <https://www.pnnl.gov/news-media/adding-batteries-hydropower-facilities-could-increase-dam-lifespan-potential-revenue>