

March 15, 2021

Representative Jason Kropf, Representative Jack Zika
900 Court St, NE H-490
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Representative Kropf and Representative Zika

I am writing on behalf of The Environmental Center in Bend, Oregon in support of House Bill 2475, the Energy Affordability Bill.

At The Environmental Center, we work hard to help advance clean technology in Central Oregon communities. Through this work we often collaborate with community members and leaders to find ways to shape future growth in a more sustainable and equitable way.

Over the course of 3 years we ran a program throughout Central Oregon installing free LED light bulbs in more than 5,000 homes in the region. To say we had a lot of conversations about energy bills during that time would be an understatement. We talked with renters and first time homeowners who were shocked by their first energy bills and grateful to learn about the money saving potential of using LEDs. I was once asked by an 80+ year-old gentleman if I thought he might save enough money to buy new hearing aid batteries. Energy burden is a real problem that households across Central Oregon face.

This bill creates opportunities to help Oregon families with lower incomes afford their energy bills through lower rates. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the need for this bill: as people spent more time in their homes and many faced income uncertainty, the share of someone's monthly income that goes towards energy bills increased.

In addition to alleviating energy burden, through intervenor funding, HB 2475 will increase meaningful engagement from the least represented voices, bringing them into the public process so they can influence decision making on resources, rates, and programs of Oregon investor-owned utilities.

The Energy Affordability Bill, HB 2475, is imperative to building a state where residents can afford to keep the lights and heat on without sacrificing other needs for their families. It's important for these same ratepayers to be supported with intervenor funding to influence the processes that significantly influence their day-to-day lives.

The Environmental Center urges you to support HB 2475 to make positive change for individuals and families across Oregon. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Thank you for your time,

Lindsey Hardy
Program Director, Energy and Waste

