



Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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To: Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources Committee Members
From: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Policy Manager, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)
Re: HB 3630 – Relating to energy

The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB) is a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization developed by citizens' initiative in 1984. We have members across the state of Oregon. CUB represents the interests of Oregon households by advocating for utility regulations and policies that protect your wallet. To date we've saved Oregon ratepayers \$9.4 billion. CUB supports HB 3603 because these policies will allow Oregon to reduce the costs it will take to meet Oregon's clean energy goals, while creating the opportunity to reduce housing instability and make utility costs more affordable for Oregonians.

Right now, several different Oregon agencies and organizations offer energy assistance, including energy efficiency resources. Finding which program offers what benefit and then how to sign up for each program can be a cumbersome task. Having a centralized resource will make these important programs more accessible to those who need them and will better ensure that Oregon's energy assistance investments reach more and more Oregonians.

A statewide Energy Strategy can also create greater efficiency in Oregon's clean energy transition which is necessitated by the Climate Protection Plan and Oregon's other clean energy laws, like the 100% Clean Electricity bill passed in 2021. Rather than operating in silos, community members, state agencies, utilities, environmental justice communities, energy-related organizations and programs, and more will come together to utilize their statutory directives, energy expertise, and community voices to work more efficiently by collaborating on a comprehensive strategy for Oregon's energy future. Basically this section of the bill says Oregon can and should work smarter, and not make things harder than they need to be.

Streamlining energy assistance programs and resources will make it easier for Oregon families to access energy assistance and energy efficiency opportunities. Energy efficiency is a simple, but critical aspect of housing stability. Oregon families are struggling to pay their energy bills and extreme weather is putting their lives at risk. We cannot afford to leave hundreds of millions of dollars on the table that would jeopardize our opportunity to use federal dollars to help make people's lives better now and in the future. Oregon has an incredible opportunity right now to address Oregon's housing crisis by not only building homes, but also building them efficiently to keep energy costs low in the short- and long-term. Families shouldn't have to choose between keeping the heat on or paying their rent. Investing in energy efficient building design is investing in keeping utility bills manageable for Oregon households.

There is no question that the clean energy transition is going to be expensive, at least up-front. All of Oregon's investor-owned utilities have had large rate increases this year. While CUB has been successful at trimming those down, with wildfire protection investments and making the shift to clean energy, some of these costs are necessary and inevitable. HB 3630 will help alleviate these energy burdens by helping Oregon access and use unprecedented federal investment in energy, importantly: energy efficiency. And by streamlining resources and making it easier for community agencies and homeowners to understand what is available and how to access it, Oregon can help alleviate the burden of increasing energy costs and housing costs, now and in the future. We ask that you vote "aye" on this very important bill.