



March 28, 2025

House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection

900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
Subject: Support for House Bill 3792

Chair Sosa, Vice-Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon's leaders created the Oregon Energy Assistance Program, or OEAP, in 1999 as part of Senate Bill 1149 to provide low-income bill payment and crisis assistance, with priority assistance directed to households who are in danger of having their electricity service disconnected. The City of Portland strongly supports House Bill 3792 to increase OEAP funding to support our most vulnerable community members.

OEAP is specific to Portland General Electric and Pacific Power with funds collected from and distributed to customers within the respective utility service territory. Today the typical residential customer contributes less than \$0.70 a month to make available a \$20 million fund to prevent electricity disconnections that can threaten people's health, livelihood, and housing stability. The need for energy assistance funding drastically outweighs the available funds, as evidenced by the record number of utility disconnections in 2024 and by estimates that current funding is only available to meet the need



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of approximately 20% of energy burdened households.¹ Recognizing the need and value that OEAP provides, the Oregon legislature passed House Bill 2739 in 2021 to provide an additional \$10 million in temporary OEAP funding to support families in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This temporary funding has ended, but the need for assistance programs has only grown with rising utility costs. HB 3792 revisits the critical need for energy assistance and proposes to double OEAP funding to \$40 million annually, which would maintain typical household contributions below \$1.50 per month.

OEAP is a vital funding source for community service providers because it more flexible and reliable than the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP. With ongoing uncertainty and cuts to critical federal programs, it is essential that the legislature increase funding to OEAP to provide stable and consistent assistance for low-income Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We appreciate your consideration of these comments and urge you to support House Bill 3792 to increase funding for the Oregon Energy Assistance Program.

Sincerely,



Eric Engstrom
Interim Director, City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/about-us/Documents/gov-relations/Legislative-Report-Oregon-Energy-Assistance-Program-12-31-2020.pdf>

