

Submitter: Lauren Isaac

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure: HB3459

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Bobby Levy, Vice-Chair Emerson Levy,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB3459.

My name is Lauren Isaac and I live in Portland. I became concerned about utility shut-offs when my son was in high school. While I have been fortunate to always have money to pay my own utility bills, I became aware that many families at my son's high school did not--so much so the school administration applied for grant money for a fund to pay utility bills for families at the school. I also learned that energy assistance funds to prevent shut-offs were woefully inadequate and often very difficult to access.

Heat is necessary for people's health, and in a world with the potential of heat domes, medically vulnerable people are in need of cooling in Oregon as well. Electricity is increasingly essential for modern life, whether it be refrigeration to ensure safety of fresh food, lighting so that homework can get done, or the ability to charge the cell phone that allows one to work.

HB 3459 would protect all low-income Oregonians from energy utility disconnections in winter months (Oct 1 - Mar 31), protect low-income households with children and/or seniors from disconnection year-round, and increase coordination between utility companies and community action agencies, as well as maintain a \$5 million increase in energy assistance funds.

When faced with disconnection, many families go without food or medicine. More than half (26) of states already have better protections than Oregon does to prevent heat shut off in the winter. This bill is an opportunity for Oregon to catch up on that front and to lead the way on providing safety for medically vulnerable people in warm months.

For these reasons I hope you will support HB3459 and provide heat and electricity access to all Oregonians.

Thank you,
Lauren Isaac

