



March 26, 2025

Chair Nathan Sosa
Vice-Chair Farrah Chaichi
Vice-Chair Virgle Osborne
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Sosa, Vice-Chairs Chaichi and Osborne, and members of the House Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee,

My name is Nolan Pleše, lobbyist for the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) which represents all 241 diverse cities across the state. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide testify you in support of HB 3792 with the -3 amendments.

Last spring, the LOC policy committee on energy and the environment set as one of our priorities to address rising utility rates. This last October, LOC members and our LOC board officially affirmed this policy as one of the LOC's top priorities this legislative session.

Oregon is experiencing an energy affordability crisis. For many Oregonians, high energy costs are eating into their grocery budgets, other utility bills, housing costs, and other necessary costs like medicine. For some, they are having to make difficult decisions on what to purchase in order to keep heat on or cooling during the summer months.

The Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) has been a lifeline for many low-income Oregonians. The flexibility of OEAP compared to the federal LIHEAP program allows for the flexibility that is necessary to the unique circumstances that each Oregonian faces. OEAP is funded through PGE and Pacific Power customers by a small amount collected on each electricity bill. These funds are only available to low-income residential customers of these utilities who meet certain eligibility requirements.

The current budget of \$20 million is insufficient compared to the growing need for support and the increasing costs of electricity bills from rising utility rates.

HB 3792 with the -3 amendment increases the budget to \$40 million as a floor instead of a ceiling. It provides the PUC with flexibility to increase rates to meet growing demand and increased utility rates by re-evaluating the annual budget every two years, along with the existing business customer cap. Oregonians would pay less than \$1.50 each month to OEAP, doubling the current amount collected. This is a small price to ensure that Oregonians stay warm or cool, and that their electricity is available. For some, a loss of electricity can literally be the difference between life and death.

Cities understand the challenges that we all face, but as leaders of their communities, they also understand that sometimes we all need to sacrifice a little to ensure the larger community is served.

HB 3792 with the -3 amendment ensures the PUC has the authority to provide the necessary assistance that low-income Oregonians need. The LOC strongly encourages this committee support, and pass HB 3792 with the -3 amendments.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Nolan Pleše
Lobbyist, League of Oregon Cities (LOC)

