

Date: March 12 2025

To: House Committee On Commerce and Consumer Protection

Subject: Support for HB 3792

Dear Chair Sosa, Vice-Chair Chaichi, Vice-Chair Osborne, and members of the committee:

I am writing as a representative of CEP in support of HB 3792: OEAP Funding Bill. CEP serves clients on the front lines of climate change including low-income, seniors and people with disabilities. CEP offers environmental and energy education, weatherization supplies, direct home repairs, and full energy retrofits, all at no cost to our community members.

Constituents from all districts are struggling to keep up with the ever-rising costs of their energy bills. We know that from 2021-now, Oregon's largest for-profit utilities have raised their rates 50%+, and one utility reported record profits in 2024. It is not an uncommon story for us to hear from our clients that as a result, they are forced to make difficult choices about the prioritization of their bills, and having to go without heat or cooling in some of the most drastic weather conditions Oregon has ever experienced.

OEAP, otherwise known as Oregon Energy Assistance Program, has been around for roughly 20 years, and is by customers, for customers. This program is customer funded by a small amount collected on each Portland General Electric (PGE) and Pacific Power electricity bill. These funds are only available to residential customers of these utilities who meet eligibility requirements. OEAP is a vital source of energy and crisis assistance because it has fewer limitations than the federal LIHEAP Program, otherwise known as Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. As Oregon, like other states in the country, continues to face uncertainty about federal funding, OEAP will provide more stable and consistent assistance for Oregonians who need it.

OEAP helps keep Oregonian's lights on by allowing community members who qualify to pay down past-due balances, avoid disconnections, and stay connected to electricity when it matters most.

With a current annual budget of \$20 million, the need drastically outweighs the available funds. According to Oregon Housing and Community Services, only ~17% of those who need and qualify for energy assistance via OEAP and LIHEAP can currently access it. This bill increases the annual amount for OEAP to \$40 million, establishing this amount as a floor for the program.

HB 3792 would also give the Public Utility Commission the authority to revisit this annual amount every two years, enabling the Commission to increase the funding if warranted. It also would enable the Commission to revisit the current bill cap for large energy customers every 2 years. In total, this investment will cost Oregonians of these two utility companies less than

\$1.50 on their monthly bills. For less than a half a cup of coffee, Oregonians can ensure that their neighbors and community members don't go without a vital and fundamental human right in today's society.

We urge your support of HB 3792. Thank you for your consideration.

Greer Klepacki
Policy & Advocacy Manager
Community Energy Project