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Legislation on Environmental Justice for Low-Income Utility Customers Passes the Oregon House

Bill creates opportunity, seeks affordability

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon House of Representatives passed legislation today to help address the energy affordability gap for low-income Oregonians. [House Bill 4067](#) kicks off a public process led by the Public Utility Commission to investigate ways to mitigate energy burdens and address other affordability and environmental justice inequities.

“Oregonians in my district and across the state are energy-burdened and struggling to pay their power bills,” said Rep. Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), the Chair of the Energy and Environment Committee. “We need more tools in our toolbox to support low-income communities especially as Oregon deals with the effects of climate change like hotter summers. This legislation will bring a much-needed focus to affordability and Environmental Justice within the Public Utility Commission.”

In 2017, Oregon households with incomes below 50 percent of the federal poverty level paid nearly a quarter of their annual income on their home energy bills. The bill passed today would give the Public Utility Commission (PUC) authority to create low-income programs and require annual reporting on data and metrics. The PUC would report findings of its investigation to the Governor’s office in 2021.

“Too many Oregonians struggle with affordability,” said Rep. Tiffany Mitchell (D-Astoria). “I am proud to support legislation that will work to continue to make progress on this important issue. Communities of color, low-income communities and coastal and rural communities are more adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards. Further, these communities are traditionally underrepresented in public processes because of cost barriers. This bill seeks to achieve environmental justice by centering these communities, incorporating culturally-specific advocacy groups, and collecting data to inform our future decisions.”

The legislation passed 44 to 10 and now goes to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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