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OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

For Immediate Release
March 16, 2021

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Oregon House Passes Energy Affordability Act to Help Low-Income Payers

House Bill 2475 creates a new rate class for low-income households, increases access and transparency in Public Utility Commission processes

SALEM, OR— The Oregon House voted today to support low-income Oregonians who are struggling to pay their utility bills by approving the Energy Affordability Act, which allows the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to create a new rate class for low-income payers.

“Energy is an essential part of daily life, and we know many Oregonians have been hit hard by the pandemic,” said Rep. Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), one of the bill’s chief sponsors. “This will allow the PUC to help low-income and cost-burdened Oregonians afford their energy by creating a lower rate class or providing discounts, as many other utility districts like water and sewer already do.”

[House Bill 2475](#) also allows environmental justice groups to participate in PUC processes. The bill expands access to non-state-funded resources for entities representing the broad interests of customers, including the interests of low-income ratepayers and environmental justice communities, in the same manner that other customer groups currently access these funds. The increased access for environmental justice communities will benefit low-income communities statewide.

“Before I joined the Legislature, I was privileged to work with frontline rural communities as a community organizer working on environmental advocacy,” said Rep. Khanh Pham (D-Portland), the bill’s other chief sponsor. “We found that, despite the divisive rhetoric pitting rural and urban communities against each other, we have so much in common in terms of what our communities need. Relief from high energy bills is a perfect example of what our communities—both in rural and urban areas—need most.”

Rep. Pam Marsh (D-Ashland), Chair of the House Committee on Energy and Environment, echoed the need for equity and inclusion in PUC processes.

“Big utilities can hire the best lawyers to argue their case,” said Rep. Marsh. “We want to make sure that Oregonians who suffer the greatest energy burden get a fair chance to have their interests heard.”

House Bill 2475, which passed 36-20, now moves to the Senate.

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