



OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS

Salem, Oregon
Oregon State Legislature

PRESS RELEASE

May 13, 2021

CONTACT: Amanda Kraus, 503-986-1074

Amanda.Kraus@oregonlegislature.gov

All Oregonians Deserve Access to Affordable Energy Service

SALEM – The Oregon Senate approved House Bill 2475 today, which is now on the way to the Governor’s desk for final approval. The bill, known as the Energy Affordability Act, will improve participation for environmental justice advocates within the Public Utility Commission’s (PUC) process, and expand the PUC’s ability to establish rate classes based on differential energy burdens on low-income customers and other social equity or environmental justice factors that affect affordability for utility customers.

“This bill offers the Public Utility Commission an opportunity to support low-income and cost-burdened Oregonians,” said Senator Lee Beyer (D-Springfield), who carried the bill on the floor. “Other publicly owned utilities are able to adjust for cost-burdened Oregonians by creating a lower rate class that can access discounts in the interest of equity,” added Senator Beyer.

“Households across the state have struggled to pay their bills. Prior to the COVID-19 emergency and tragic wildfires, many struggled to keep their lights on, and their other energy expenses paid for,” said Senator Deb Patterson (D-Salem) a sponsor of House Bill 2475. “Overlapping crises have amplified the financial squeeze too many are facing. This policy will make certain the Public Utility Commission can support Oregonians by granting the tools they need to create a lower rate class and provide discounts to low-income Oregonians,” she added.

Currently, as part of the rate making process, the PUC uses a variety of factors to determine how to classify rate payers in order to determine their utility rates. House Bill 2475 would expand the considerations the PUC may use to establish rate classifications in order to ensure they can take into account the differential energy burdens of low-income customers and consider other social equity and environmental justice factors that affect affordability.

“The cost of basic utilities has been especially difficult for communities of color, multifamily households and low-income Oregonians,” said Senator Kayse Jama (D-East Portland), who also sponsored HB 2475. “This past year has been undeniably challenging for these communities who have been impacted due to devastating circumstances outside of their control, and they deserve this relief,” Senator Jama added.

House Bill 2475 passed the Senate with a vote of 18-11. The bill now goes to the Governor for her signature.

###