June 13, 2019

To: Speaker Tina Kotek, Senate President Peter Courtney, Co-Chair Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Dan Rayfield, Vice-Chair Greg Smith, and Vice-Chair David Gomberg

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2242

Dear Speaker Kotek, President Courtney, Co-Chair Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Dan Rayfield, Vice-Chair Greg Smith, and Vice-Chair David Gomberg:

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) is an independent, statewide, not-for-profit membership organization of over 950 planners from across the state working for cities, counties, special districts, state agencies, community-based organizations, and private firms. OAPA provides leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in community planning, promoting education and resident empowerment, and by providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change. We are writing in support of HB 2242, which would increase inclusivity and access in Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) proceedings and help introduce a key tool for energy affordability to Oregon. We understand that the bill is awaiting referral to a Ways and Means subcommittee and urge you to assign it to Transportation and Economic Development.

HB 2242 achieves the following crucial things:

- **Gives the PUC authority for utilities to provide rate designs, such as discounts, that help reduce energy burden**¹ for low-income or other underserved customers.

- **Provides funding access to organizations representing low-income and environmental justice customer interests for participation in regulatory processes** in the same manner that other customer groups currently access these funds.

- **Establishes a Low-Income and Environmental Justice Advocate to support low-income and underrepresented ratepayers** in all relevant PUC proceedings, serve as a liaison to the Environmental Justice Task Force, and help the PUC to hold meetings around the state to take into account feedback from across Oregon in a way that it currently does not. The Office of the Low-Income and Environmental Justice Advocate is the key element that ties the bill together.

Good planning processes mean robust community engagement centered on those most affected by decisions. Public involvement is a cornerstone of Oregon’s land use planning program, and OAPA supports HB 2242 because it helps to expand those principles into energy policy, which intersects with much of our work as planners. Access to affordable energy leads to strong and resilient communities. Utility regulation that looks to the future and is grounded in environmental justice help us build better Oregon cities. In particular, we look forward to working with the Low-Income and Environmental Justice Advocate and view this position as a way to bring energy policy conversations into communities around the state.

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¹ Energy burden is the percentage of a family’s income that goes to energy bills.
Housing affordability, addressing climate change and community resilience, and economic and community development are also key elements to OAPA’s work, as reflected in our 2019 legislative priorities:

- Improve housing affordability and availability.
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to mitigate the effects of climate change and implement strategies that
- Support a transition toward low-carbon communities (mitigation).
- Plan for and implement adaptation strategies to build resilience and reduce vulnerability.
- Fund planning for and the development of infrastructure.
- Promote and advocate for an Oregon planning program that works for all communities.

Energy burden harms many communities throughout Oregon, especially in the Southern, Central, and Eastern parts of the state. More affordable energy bills, which can be fostered through low-income discounts, help prevent families from having to choose between utilities and other essential expenses, increasing their capacity to participate in and contribute to healthy communities. When families are faced with fewer burdens like unaffordable energy bills, they experience increased resilience and reduced vulnerability.

OAPA urges your support of HB 2242. It is good policy and provides needed resources that will have positive ripple effects from the PUC into community planning around the state. **We urge you to ensure that it is passed through to Transportation and Economic Development, fully funded, and passed on the House and Senate floors.**

We appreciate your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Tillerman, AICP, President
Board of Directors

Damian Syrnyk, AICP, Chair
Legislative and Policy Affairs Committee