

February 16, 2021

Re: Support for HB 2398

Dear Chair Marsh and Committee Members:

I am an architect and builder with over 30 years of experience in the construction industry, most of that experience gained on building projects here in Oregon. For the past 21 years I have worked with Walsh Construction Co., in the roles of Quality Director, General Manager and - for the past three years - as Director of Innovation. Over this timeframe I have worked on a wide variety of building types involving a range of construction types, though my deepest experience has been with multifamily housing and mixed-use buildings, using wood, concrete, masonry and steel construction types. I have watched as our industry has grown and transformed over the years towards designing and building ever more energy efficient and durable buildings and have been an active participant in that process.

At this point, I have to ask the question of myself and my designer and builder colleagues, and I ask you as committee members: "What Are We Waiting For?" The time for "upping our game" in terms of building energy efficiency is NOW. There are many compelling economic, social and environmental reasons to make our buildings more efficient, and progress in this direction has been too slow.

The energy efficiency measures outlined in the Reach Code are by now well-developed and have been tried and tested by many builders and contractors in Oregon and around the Pacific Northwest. They involve proven materials and technologies that work well, and in nearly every case they significantly improve the quality and comfort of the built environment in addition to reducing energy use. The incremental additional first cost to implement these measures is minimal, and in most cases is recouped within several years of building operation due to savings in energy costs. As a practitioner, I particularly appreciate that the Reach Code offers a "menu" of optional measures to choose from, which will provide designers and builders a great deal of flexibility to achieve compliance in the most economical manner. The construction industry is ready for the widespread application of these measures across the breadth of building types built in the state of Oregon. HB 2398 will give local jurisdictions the opportunity to adopt the requirements of the REACH Code in their communities as a way to help meet their energy and carbon reduction goals, and establish a valuable precedent for achieving much higher levels of efficiency both economically and reliably.

Again, I ask: WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB 2398.

Mike Steffen  
Portland