



Service Employees
International Union
Local 503

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To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
From: Mike Powers, SEIU Local 503
RE: Support for SB 54
Date: March 25, 2025

Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Powers, and I represent SEIU Local 503, a union of approximately 70,000 workers across every county in Oregon. We advocate for a just and vibrant society where all workers are treated with dignity and respect and have jobs that provide for themselves and their families.

As Oregon summers grow increasingly hotter, too many working people struggle to stay cool, putting their health and safety at risk. Current state law does not classify cooling as an essential service, despite the rising number of heat-related deaths. That's why we strongly support SB 54.

Low-income households are especially vulnerable, as many cannot afford cooling systems. In 2023, the median salary in Oregon was just over \$61,000, yet nearly 60% of our members earn less than \$40,000 annually — bringing home roughly \$2,600 per month. With rent for a one-bedroom apartment around \$1,800 (plus and minus), there is little to no room for the added expense of cooling.

SB 54 is a critical step toward equity, ensuring that safe living conditions, including cooling, are accessible to all Oregonians.

We acknowledge concerns from property owners and appreciate the bill's phased implementation. We encourage continued discussions to address potential financial and structural challenges.

With these considerations in mind, we urge the Committee to advance SB 54. This bill will improve — and in some cases, save — the lives of many Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration.