



February 1, 2022

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court St. NE, Room 453
Portland, OR 97301

RE: Letter in Support of SB 1536 with -1 amendment

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my strong support of SB 1536 with the -1 amendment, which will help keep our communities safe during periods of excessive heat.

Extreme heat is one of the deadliest consequences of climate change, killing more people each year on average than any other weather-related event.¹ A mountain of scientific research shows that climate change is poised to make heat waves longer, more dangerous, and more frequent. What were once-in-a-millennia heat events are now becoming more routine, making access to air conditioning a lifesaving necessity.

Last summer's unprecedented heat dome shattered temperature records and killed hundreds of people across the Pacific Northwest. Those who lost their lives were some of our most vulnerable residents: they couldn't leave their homes due to health conditions, afford air conditioning, or get transportation to a cooling center. This tragedy was a wakeup call to prepare our communities – particularly the most vulnerable – for what's to come.

During last summer's state of emergency, I was flooded with messages from Beaverton residents who were prohibited from installing window air conditioning units in their rental homes. More than half of Beaverton households (50.6%) live in rental housing – one of the highest rates among Oregon cities – making such bans a significant threat to public health and safety. As we tried to assist residents, it became evident that nothing in state law exists to provide clarity to renters and property owners on what must be provided—or even allowed—during periods of excessive heat. We also discovered that cities lack authority to prevent landlords from prohibiting the use of portable AC units by renters, even during these life-threatening periods.

Policies and programs to protect vulnerable people from preventable heat deaths lag far behind the growing need. This bill provides clear guidance on what is expected to keep community members safe during periods of extreme heat and provides financial assistance to achieve that outcome sustainably for renters and property owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for SB 1536 with the -1 amendment. Please feel welcome to contact me for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lacey Beaty".

Lacey Beaty
Mayor

¹ US Department of Commerce, N. O. A. A. (n.d.). *Weather related fatality and injury statistics*. National Weather Service. Retrieved January 31, 2022, from <https://www.weather.gov/hazstat/>