



February 16, 2021

Representatives Pam Marsh, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, H-490
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of The Environmental Center in Bend, Oregon in support of House Bill 2398. At The Environmental Center, we work hard to help advance clean technology in Central Oregon communities. Through this work we are often working with community members and leaders to find ways to shape future growth in a more sustainable way. Our experience with the City of Bend's Climate action planning process encouraged us to support this bill.

In a program we ran throughout the region I was able to experience firsthand the unintended impacts of code minimum homes. I experienced residents living in newer homes that assumed that they would be efficient and affordable to live in. However the energy bills associated with these code minimum homes put them into situations where they had to choose between paying high energy bills or providing essentials for their families. We know that about a third of our community's new construction is already choosing to build at levels of performance similar to what the Reach Code would require. What this bill could do is ensure that all homes, especially those homes built for workforce housing and low income families, will be able to benefit from the benefits of efficient, durable, and healthy homes.

We have an opportunity with this bill to allow cities to adopt a Reach Code that will have lasting benefits for decades to come. One of the important conversations our communities have been engaging in over the years is discussing ways to ensure that the new buildings being built are as efficient, durable, and healthy as possible. During our work with the city of Bend's Climate Action Planning process we ran into significant roadblocks in finding ways to shape this building stock because of current restrictions that don't allow jurisdictions to create code that differs from state building code.

HB 2398 would allow Oregon to advance new buildings by:

- Allowing communities like Bend to enable investment in higher efficiency buildings sooner, and avoid costly retrofits later on.
- Enabling cities to adopt one unified Reach Code will reduce the potential patchwork of different rules that could result if each city created their own set of building codes.

- Code development helps shape the availability and affordability of materials needed to meet those standards. If HB 2398 is adopted and cities start adopting the Reach Code we could see the already low cost premium of these upgrades become even smaller.

We need opportunities to advance the energy, durability, and health of our homes. HB 2398 allows cities to make those improvements. Please support HB 2398 as an easy path to allow cities to work to improve housing for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time,

Neil Baunsgard
The Environmental Center
16 NW Kansas Ave
Bend, OR 97703
Neil@Envirocenter.org