



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1536

Senate Committee on Housing and Development- 2022 Regular Session

February 2, 2022

Sara Crowell on behalf of Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Sara Crowell, a legislative fellow and Master's of Public Health student at the OHSU/PSU School of Public Health, submitting testimony for the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and the Nurse Practitioners of Oregon. ONA is a professional association and labor union that represents more than 15,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers throughout the state. ONA is committed to advocating for initiatives that support quality of care and healthier communities on behalf of nurses, patients, and their families. In alignment with this mission, Oregon Nurses Association submits our support for SB 1536, which would provide vital assistance to Oregonians most at risk for heat-related illness, injury, and death by limiting restrictions on installing portable cooling devices in certain residences, requiring certain residential landlords provide community spaces for cooling, and requiring rented spaces in certain facilities provide sufficient electrical service for renters' reasonable heating and cooling needs.

Oregon has seen the devastating effects of climate change through the increased incidence of heatwaves, wildfires, and drought over the past several years.² These natural disasters continue to pose an extensive threat to the health, safety and well-being of individuals and communities in our state. Marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; the young and old; rural, Tribal, and low-income communities; and those with disabilities and/or pre-existing conditions are particularly at risk of experiencing the negative health effects of climate extremes.¹ In the Summer of 2021, Oregon experienced one of the worst heat waves in the state's recorded history, which took the lives of over 90 Oregonians in 28 cities. An analysis from Multnomah County, where the majority of deaths occurred, found that most of those who died were older, lived alone in an apartment or multifamily unit, and did not have working air conditioning.³

The need for this legislation is significant and urgent to help protect our families and communities. The frequency and magnitude of days with a temperature over 90°F is increasing across Oregon, a trend that is projected to continue.¹ ONA urges your support of SB 1536 to help remove barriers to life-saving cooling devices for vulnerable Oregonians and help prevent a similar tragedy from happening again.

References:

1. Dalton, M., and E. Fleishman, editors. 2021. Fifth Oregon Climate Assessment. Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon. <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/occri/oregon-climate-assessments/>.
2. O'Brien, J. (2015, September 26). Extreme Weather Events in a Changing Climate. Oregon Forests and Climate Change. https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/orforestscc/2015/08/21/climate_change_extremes/
3. Samayoa, M. T. A. J. (2021, August 10). Oregon medical examiner releases names of June heat wave victims. Opb. <https://www.opb.org/article/2021/08/06/oregon-june-heat-wave-deaths-names-revealed-medical-examiner/>