



19 March 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon Legislature

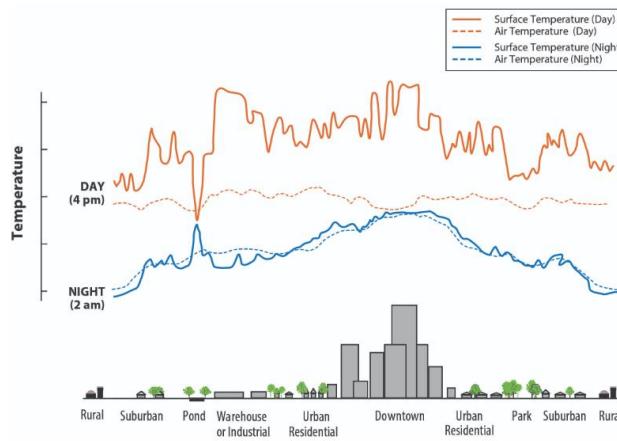
Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

RE: Senate Bill 54

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the **Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency** in Salem. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk, and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually, we provide more than \$80 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 60,000 Oregonians in poverty. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, sit on the Housing Committee of the Racial Justice Council, and previously was a member of the House Bill 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, and recently Chaired the Legislature's Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge. For many years, I have been an advocate for the homeless and housing unstable residents of our state.

We write in strong support of SB 54 to ensure that all Oregonians have access to safe and climate-controlled housing. The act requires cooling to be a component of habitability in rental units. It also requires that landlords provide cooling spaces in existing multi-unit buildings with 10 units or more by 2036. In particular, it also requires that units be kept 15 degrees cooler than the outside temperature in the summer and below 80 degrees (even if it is really hot). New rental units would required to be cooled by next year.

In the northwest particularly, we have not made climate control units a priority. Thirty years ago, before the current impact of global warming, the necessity of these requirements was arguable. They are not today. Our state is heating up, and, in urban areas in particular, we have heat densities that can be gravely injurious to health in the summer without cooling. These impacts are gravest in formerly redlined areas of our communities, which not only often lack core services but can become food and green space-deficient. The older construction, massive amounts of concrete, and lack of adequate green space drive up the heat in dense urban, low-income communities, creating wild, disparate impacts for low-income residents and communities of color in Oregon. The days are hotter there. The nights are warmer, and consecutive hot days negatively impact those who live in formerly redlined and other urban residential settings.¹



¹ <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northwest/topic/urban-heat-islands-northwest>

In 2021, the Northwest experienced a heat dome event, which drove temperatures above 115 degrees. There were roughly 100 deaths in Oregon from that event alone, along with another 119 just to the north in Washington State.² Last July, 17 people died of heat-related illness in Oregon. Most were preventable.

Many of the people we are trying to help with this bill are elderly, disabled, with little financial means to escape the dangers of a warming world. At Community Action, we are the largest shelter provider in Marion County. Over the past decade, we have run traditional and transitional homeless shelters. We have supported ODHS in wildfire recovery work, and evacuations here in Oregon. In Salem, we have run shelters for folks fleeing rising water, smoke from wildfires, ice and snow, and backbreaking heat waves. Sheltering has a role and a purpose, but it is not a good option for folks who live in homes and who have health needs and acuities that shelters are not designed to support. People are safer at home, and our shelter network, as strained as it is, cannot be the first line of defense against the sweltering and dangerous heat waves we will see in the future. Now is the time to protect our communities of color, our aging population, those who are disabled, and all others who have a place to live that becomes unsafe in the unrelenting heat.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Respectfully,



Jimmy Jones
Executive Director

² <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northwest/topic/2021-northwest-heat-dome-causes-impacts-and-future-outlook>

JULY 2024 HEATWAVE IMPACT SUMMARY



Mid-Willamette Valley
COMMUNITY ACTION
Compassion in Motion

OUTREACH RESPONSE

Teams worked throughout Marion and Polk County, providing individuals with water, electrolytes, weather-related supplies and navigating people to cooling centers throughout the region.

COOLING CENTER RESPONSE

Cooling Centers were operated at the ARCHES Day Center, ARCHES Woodburn Shelter, and SOCC in Mill City. A cooling center specifically for youth 11-18 was open at the Drop-In. These centers provided guests with a place to cool down, get hydrated, and work with staff to help them achieve their housing and healthcare goals.



OPERATIONAL
PERIOD - DAYS

7



AVERAGE
HIGH

101.57



COOLING
CENTER HOURS

147.5



OUTREACH
HOURS

180



COOLING CENTER
VISITS

896



SERVICE
TRANSACTIONS*

3,523