



Oregon Just
Transition Alliance



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon

Senate Committee on Housing and Development

February 13, 2024

Support: prioritize funding for the Healthy Homes program in the -3 Amendment to SB 1530

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

We share your 2024 priorities of solving the housing crisis, improving Oregonians' health, and lowering the costs of living. Solving Oregon's housing crisis is about more than building new housing, it's about keeping vulnerable people from losing their already-existing homes. When everyone in our community has a healthy home with affordable utility bills, it enhances housing security for our most vulnerable Oregonians. **The undersigned organizations are grateful for your recognition of the Healthy Homes Grant Program as a housing solution and your proposed investment of \$7.5 million in the program's Healthy Homes Repair Fund in the -3 amendment to SB 1530. The scope of the problem is vast and this program will play a key role in desperately-needed repairs like mitigating mold and fixing holes in roofs and walls after events like the most recent ice storm. We respectfully urge you to invest as much as you can in this program, so it totals at least \$15 million this year.**

An estimated 49-percent of homes and apartments Oregonians live in were built before 1980.¹ Much of this housing is energy inefficient and in need of repairs. This leads to higher utility bills, sickness, and lower quality of life, especially for those who can least afford it. Energy costs are going up, and the added impact of disasters such as extreme heat and wildfire smoke worsens health issues. Financial strain for repairs competes with rent or mortgage payments, potentially leading to homelessness. Frontline communities, including Black, Indigenous, and people of color, low-income families, people with disabilities, and people in rural areas are at the highest risk.

The innovative Healthy Homes program supports home repairs and improvements to lower energy bills, keep vulnerable families healthy and reduce medical costs. While initial funding was a good start, it will run out before the next budget cycle because there is so much need. We respectfully request that at

¹ U.S. Census Bureau data on housing units in Oregon

least \$15 million is dedicated to the Healthy Homes program in 2024 to keep this program going until the 2025 budget takes effect. This will ensure the program's continuity for its beneficiaries, community partners, and agency staff.

The Healthy Homes program provides funding to lower-income Oregonians, **filling gaps in state and federal energy efficiency and weatherization funding**. This includes covering costs for mold and lead mitigation, which must be completed before making energy-efficiency improvements to a home. The various incentives can be braided together to help fully pay for essential home repairs and improvements. The Oregon Health Authority, which directs the Healthy Homes program, received \$15 million of one-time funding to serve the whole state. As a comparison, the Portland Clean Energy Fund has at least \$350 million over the next 5 years for these kinds of holistic home upgrades in Portland city limits.

The Healthy Homes program was championed by the Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity campaign of environmental justice, community-based, and climate organizations. It was set up by **bipartisan HB 2842** in 2021 to support the long-term well-being of low-income Oregonians by supporting home upgrades that lower energy bills, improve indoor air quality, and create disaster-resilient homes.

We're in a housing crisis and climate crisis. The Healthy Homes program addresses both issues by helping vulnerable individuals to maintain housing, lower living expenses, enhance health and resilience, and reduce climate pollution. **We respectfully request you make this additional funding for Healthy Homes a top priority in this year's budget.**

Thank you for your consideration,

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