



February 11, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and Members of the House Housing Committee,

Unite Oregon strongly supports HB 2842 to create a Healthy Homes program. As members of the Fair Shot For All Coalition we support this policy as part of the 2021 legislative agenda and the ongoing work for environmental justice in Oregon. Unite Oregon is a statewide racial and social justice nonprofit working to eliminate systemic inequities and fight for a more just and equitable society for immigrants, refugees, people of color, rural communities, and low-income Oregonians. Founded in 2003, Unite Oregon is based in Portland, OR and has chapters in Multnomah County, Washington County, Clackamas County and Rogue Valley.

Every Oregonian should have a healthy home to live in—especially as Oregon experiences increasingly dangerous wildfire seasons and navigates a respiratory pandemic.

Yet 54% of Oregonians live in housing built before 1978 that is energy-inefficient and in need of repairs, weatherproofing, and upgrades for disaster resiliency. Families with low-incomes, families living in rural and tribal communities, and individuals that identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or people of color are the most impacted due to decades of redlining and other discriminatory practices. Consequently, our communities are more likely to experience sick days and hospital visits caused by mold, cold weather, asthma flare-ups, and the inability to take refuge from bad outdoor air quality. All of this is exacerbated by, and more dangerous during, a respiratory pandemic.

In 2017, Oregonians spent \$28 million on asthma-related hospital visits. Thirty-two percent of children live in energy burdened homes and asthma is the leading cause of missed school days.

Our housing quality problem is harming everyday people who are already hurting, and putting a burden on our healthcare system. This is exacerbated by—and more dangerous during—a respiratory pandemic.

HB 2842 creates a Healthy Homes program at the Oregon Healthy Authority to provide grants to eligible entities that provide financial assistance to persons in low income households to repair and rehabilitate their residences and to landlords to repair and rehabilitate dwelling units.

Creating and funding a Healthy Homes program creates more equity for our communities and makes good fiscal sense for our state. HB 2842 will: 1) help low-income families spend less money on heating and cooling; 2) create good local jobs in retrofitting and repairs; 3) provide a refuge from increasingly bad outdoor air quality; 4) reduce burden on hospitals and families by supporting better respiratory health; and 5) reduce the number of sick days for both adults and kids.

Please vote yes on HB 2842 to help build an Oregon where everyone lives in a home that is healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Sushma Raghavan
Unite Oregon