



January 21, 2022

ZERO Coalition

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Chair Lieber and Committee Members

Senate Interim Committee On Energy and Environment

Re: Support for the REACH Code Bill (SB 1518) - Allow our communities the freedom to REACH further for energy savings

Dear Chair Lieber and committee members:

The ZERO Coalition (ZERO) brings together the work and perspectives of architectural firms, energy efficiency organizations, construction businesses, policy advocates, health practitioners, manufacturers, government agencies, community organizations, environmental justice partners, and energy service providers. Together we are collaborating to help Oregon meet its climate responsibilities by taking an equity-centered approach to [decarbonizing buildings](#) in Oregon. We work to ensure that the market conditions and regulatory frameworks are in place to advance sustainability in the built environment in a way that leaves no one behind.

Buildings use about one half of all energy used in Oregon. This energy accounts for about one third of our state's greenhouse gas emissions. ***The State of Oregon is holding cities back*** from climate action and enacting more robust energy efficiency standards for buildings. The Reach Code bill (SB 1518) would allow Oregon cities to choose a climate action by opting into stronger energy efficiency building codes, developed by the Oregon Building Codes Division.

How we build is how we live: Cities like Bend, Hood River and Beaverton, Oregon are growing rapidly; this is a critical moment to let communities ensure that new-construction homes and commercial buildings are built cleaner and more efficiently. Buildings are often used for 50+ years. During a building's initial construction, developers, architects, and engineers make critical choices about materials, infrastructure, and weatherization. These choices are generally "locked in" for the life of that structure. When these systems are dependent on inefficient and polluting fossil fuels, the amount of air pollution and greenhouse gases released over the building's lifespan is staggering. Energy efficient buildings are our first line of defense against increasingly extreme heat, wildfires and air pollution.

How are building codes related to the climate crisis? Most of us understand building codes in the context of safety—policies and requirements that help ensure residences and commercial

structures don't easily collapse, catch fire, or otherwise endanger their occupants. However, building codes also regulate the adoption of energy efficiency and air quality measures. In this context, advocating for better building codes can reduce air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy waste at their second-largest and longest-lived source: Buildings.

Energy efficiency is good for our health: Maximizing energy efficiency is critical to making our homes and workplaces healthier. They also provide adequate fresh air to protect occupants from indoor hazards like COVID-19 and outdoor hazards like wildfires. Building smart from the start keeps wildfire smoke and other outdoor air pollution out, helps regulate indoor temperatures, and reduces fossil fuel energy use.

We can save Oregonians money: In the building sector, shifting to proven energy efficiency technologies carries substantial cost savings. Making our homes and workplaces more efficient reduces energy use, which can help homeowners and businesses save money on their bills over time. Renters will enjoy cleaner indoor air, more comfort during heat and cold, and lower utility bills. That's why many affordable housing builders support this bill.

Climate change doesn't take a year off, neither can we: Oregon's Legislature took significant climate action last year, but the worsening climate crisis requires that we continue moving forward. Our collective window of time to act on climate is closing. This bill gives leading Oregon communities the freedom to move further, faster to act on climate.

Communities want a Reach code: While the state standard sets a baseline, cities, towns, and counties deserve the choice to act faster on climate and ensure new construction is better for everyone who wants to live, work, and play there. Communities throughout the state—including Salem, Corvallis, Eugene, Ashland, Bend, Hood River, Mosier, Milwaukie, Portland, and Beaverton—have been asking for the freedom to choose to go further, with better energy efficient buildings.

[According to Corvallis Mayor Biff Trayber and Milwaukie Mayor Mark Gamba](#), “[a Reach code] would allow cities to make forward-thinking, energy efficient and cost-effective new construction possible, saving us valuable time and money.” For example, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy [estimates](#) that high-efficiency electric heat pumps save Oregon consumers approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 over the systems’ lifetimes when compared to less-efficient fossil fuel furnaces.

We are concerned our state is not prepared for the climate crisis disrupting our lives and growing worse. Extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and air pollution are killing and sickening Oregonians. Our first line of defense is energy efficiency. Efficient, weatherized homes and buildings help to keep pollution and smoke out, keep cooling and heating in, and cut down on energy bills.



ZERO

We are writing to ask you to support the “Reach Code” bill (SB 1518) by committing to vote yes and educating and encouraging your colleagues to make it a priority to pass this session. Please vote to give our communities the choice by passing the Reach Code bill this year.

Sincerely,



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