

Dear Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Noble and Williams, and members of the Committee,

My name is Tess Freeman, I live in Bend, Oregon and I work at The Environmental Center. I support HB 2842 because health starts at home! People living in energy inefficient homes experience sick days and hospital visits caused by mold, cold weather, and an inability to take refuge from wildfire smoke and bad outdoor air quality.

This summer, we experienced smoke from wildfires, unlike any summer I've experienced living in Oregon. We didn't go outside for weeks and combined with the implications of the pandemic we were forced to take refuge inside our homes. This time period created an impossible scenario for those whose homes do not protect them from the toxins in the air and is disproportionately felt by those in my community who are low-income because they can't afford the upgrades to make their homes air-tight and energy-efficient. HB 2842 has the potential to help alleviate these families from the high-cost of making their homes more energy-efficient, reduce their energy bills, and increase their health while simultaneously helping reduce emissions in the state.

Lowering the amount of energy we waste reduces our need to burn coal and other fossil fuels to generate electricity. These reductions in pollution mean big gains for health, as pollutants from fossil fuel combustion contribute to four of the leading causes of death in the United States: cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, heart disease, and stroke. These diseases again dispositionally affect low-income communities. We need to make systemic changes in order to create opportunities for low-income communities to protect themselves from toxins in the environment and impact their overall health. HB 2042 is one step in this direction.

Thank you, Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, and Vice-Chair Morgan and members of the Committee, for supporting Healthy Homes, HB 2842.

Sincerely,  
Tess Freeman