

Rep. Julie Fahey, Chair, Rep. Winsley Campos and Rep. Lily Morgan, Vice Chairs

And members of the House Committee on Housing

For the record my name is Twila Jacobsen and I am co-chair of the SEIU503 Climate Justice Committee.

Housing is more than a roof over one's head. It is the center of life, especially during the past 11 months due to the pandemic, a workplace encompassing paid labor and the unpaid care work including child and elder care, teacher, nurse, counselor, chef, project manager, the work that keeps the monetized economy afloat.

Prior to the pandemic and my retirement, I was an Options Counselor with Sr. & Disability Services in Lane County. I made home visits to discuss programs and services available to help seniors stay in their homes, people with disabilities have transportation, and possible eligibility for other services, including energy assistance and home repairs.

Many of the homes were not in the best of condition – old heating systems that were very inefficient and expensive, plumbing and water heaters that leaked causing mold and rotting floors. And often the homes were older mobile home structures with little or no value in the market with heat sources in dangerous disrepair, or physically inaccessible (such as wood heat). There is little to no support for upgrades.

Yet these homes provide the utmost important need of the resident, their own ability to remain living independently. Without it, many more low-income seniors, people with disabilities and low-wage workers would be houseless, and there would be more demand on Medicaid for placement in facilities resulting in increased costs to the public.

Current programs are not able to meet the needs of the community. A past co-worker recently worked with a client who badly needed gutter and roof repair work. Her repair was not expensive or extensive enough to meet the criteria for Habitat for Humanity, and was too complicated for the City of Eugene's Home repair program. She was able to have the minimum possible helpful work done using some cash assistance, but the underlying problems remain unsolved and she does not and will not have the income to address them before her only shelter is severely compromised.

A recent study found that there are only 28 homes that are affordable and available per 100 extremely low income renter households in Oregon. Our lowest paid members, Oregonians who work for a living, often still can't afford adequate, healthy, safe housing. Successfully implemented, this bill will improve the lives of represented workers all over the state, as well as low income households and frontline communities. This is an INVESTMENT, not a cost. And

it is a smart investment as the return will be felt in reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, energy burden and healthcare costs.

Wealthier Americans have per capita carbon footprints ~25% higher than those of lower-income residents, primarily due to larger homes. In especially affluent suburbs, these emissions can be 15 times higher than nearby neighborhoods. The positive relationship between income and emissions suggests that Americans with the highest emissions are also best situated economically to bear the costs of upgrading windows and installing heat pumps and solar systems. Reducing the carbon footprint of homes that are low income will combat energy poverty, or burden. Energy bills can supplant the purchase of food and medicine. Retrofitting homes in low-income neighborhoods, with financial support from government, could cut emissions and energy bills. It can also reduce the costs of medical care.

The Oregon Health Authority released its first annual report on the impacts of the climate crisis on Oregonians' health, fulfilling part of the Oregon Climate Action Plan, Governor Kate Brown's executive order 20-04 signed in March. This past summer Oregonians experienced an unprecedented wildfire season amidst [record setting heat waves](#). A worker reported working with multiple (and steadily increasing numbers of) clients who themselves or their animals required emergency medical care due to poor air quality in homes without air conditioning or adequate filtration during the wildfires. Lower income Oregonians (i.e. those living on less than \$20,000 a year) report higher rates of asthma than Oregonians with higher household incomes. Currently, American Indian and African American people in Oregon experience higher rates of asthma than any other group in Oregon and bear most of the cost burdens in the healthcare system.

Those most exposed and vulnerable to extreme heat, air pollution and other climate hazards are also most vulnerable to COVID-19. Already, communities of color and lower income communities suffer from systemic health and social inequities such as overcrowded housing, and inability to telework.

SEIU503 Climate Justice Committee asks you to promote the passage of HB2842, the Healthy Homes Bill. It is an investment in a healthier, better housed and happier society.

References: https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/Gap-Report_2020.pdf

<https://harvard-cga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=ea1929b8f2bf482dadad173a3f62c27e>