



February 3rd, 2022

To: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

RE: Oregon House Bill 4058 – Emergency Heat Relief for Communities

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Hudson, and members of the committee,

My name is David De La Torre, and I am the Healthy Climate Program Director at Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. Guided by the values and expertise of healthcare and public health, Oregon PSR works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. We support HB 4058 - Emergency Heat Relief for Communities legislation because it protects against health disparities related to climate change during extreme heat events, especially among medically vulnerable, environmental justice, and low-income communities.

Oregonians deserve access to affordable, efficient, and safe heating and cooling resources during extreme weather events. In the summer of 2021, Oregon experienced a record heat wave, the second-worst natural disaster in our state's recorded history. HB 4058-2 was developed as an emergency heat relief bill in direct response to the deadly heat dome that occurred last summer.

To provide some insight into the health effects and costs of excessive heat, I'll reference stories from some of our members. One internal medicine physician in the Portland area noted that "during the heatwave last summer many of [his] patients, regardless of what conditions brought them to the emergency room, had coexisting dehydration or heat exhaustion which complicated their treatment and increased their risk of poor outcomes, longer hospitalizations, and increased costs." A family physician noted that "even as hospitals and clinics were experiencing long-term strain from the COVID-19 pandemic, [they] had patients coming into clinic and calling [their] triage line who were experiencing a wide range of distress from extreme heat like nothing [he] had ever seen before." It is important to note that the most vulnerable people are seniors, people with disabilities, and people with underlying medical conditions, especially those living in upper-level multifamily units or manufactured homes.

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Most people who died as a result of the extreme heat had no access to life-saving cooling devices such as air conditioning or heat pumps in their home, and many were renters with low incomes. Cooling devices would have limited people's heat exposure, significantly lessening the risk of short and long-term morbidity and mortality. We thus urge you to support HB 4058 - Emergency Heat Relief for Communities to ensure that communities have access to much-needed safe heating and cooling during extreme weather events.

Sincerely,
David De La Torre, Healthy Climate Program Director
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility



Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
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