

March 17, 2023

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Akash Singh and I am writing on behalf of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), a national organization that puts science into action with the goal of contributing to an equitable, sustainable, and healthy future. UCS is proud to be supported by more than 10,000 Oregonians, including over 500 professionals who are a part of our Science Network.

I am writing to you today in support of SBs 868, 869, 870, and 871.

UCS is a proud partner in a broader coalition of labor, builders, public health, affordable housing, environmental justice, local government, and climate experts from across the state of Oregon. As a proud member of this statewide coalition, I am writing to you today in support of SBs 868, 869, 870, and 871.

SB 868 aligns Oregon's energy efficiency programs with our state climate goals and accelerates the deployment of 500,000 heat pumps. SB 869 updates Oregon's base building code so that future buildings are constructed to be more efficient and resilient. SB 870 improves the energy efficiency of large, energy-intensive commercial buildings. SB 871 helps reduce barriers for public buildings to be made more efficient and healthier.

Homes and buildings are the second largest, and growing, source of climate pollution in Oregon. Buildings are responsible for 34 percent of Oregon's total climate emissions because of the fossil fuels used for electricity to power our homes and buildings, and the fossil gas piped in for heating and cooking.

Energy-efficient buildings keep wildfire smoke and other forms of air pollution out and help regulate indoor temperatures. They can be even more effective when we replace methane "natural" gas in our homes and buildings. Methane is a fossil fuel and burning it for heat and cooking is dangerous to the climate and our health.

Energy efficient buildings also help Oregonians save money on their utility bills - a new all-electric home in the Pacific Northwest can save \$4,300 over 15 years compared to a house relying on methane gas. These savings are especially important for Oregonians of color and low-income Oregonians, who are disproportionately impacted by unhealthy and inefficient housing and spend up to three times as much on their energy bills because their homes are in older, less efficient buildings.

Methane gas is more expensive than many Oregonians can afford and its costs are increasing. NW Natural Gas - the largest fossil fuel company in Oregon - increased its

rates more than 40% in 13 months.<sup>1</sup> This kind of cost is having a real, devastating impact on many Oregonian families. Meanwhile, the cost of renewable electricity, like solar and wind, is falling.

Approximately a third of buildings in Oregon that will exist in 2050 have yet to be built. With rapidly growing cities and high demand for housing, it is imperative for these new buildings to be energy efficient. SBs 868, 869, 870, and 871 are a chance to ensure that we do just that and in the process also create a substantial number of well-paying jobs.

I urge you to vote yes on SBs 868, 869, 870, and 871 and help ensure that Oregon's future is cleaner, greener, and more breathable.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

*Akash Singh*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://oregoncub.org/news/blog/natural-gas-prices-are-going-up-before-winter/2610/>