



February 2, 2022

House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 4058

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is advancing equitable policymaking and whole-child advocacy statewide to ensure our children and youth have what they need, regardless of their race or where they live, to thrive by activating meaningful change for children and families. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We collect, analyze, and elevate data and research that, alongside lived experience, drives conversations in support of Oregon's future. We partner alongside ~120 organizations through The Children's Agenda to uplift and advocate for community-driven, equity-centered policies and investments that will improve the lives of Oregon's children and families.

We write in support of HB 4058: Emergency Heat Relief for Communities, which is part of the 2022 Children's Agenda.

Oregonians deserve access to affordable, efficient, and safe heating and cooling during extreme weather events. In the Summer of 2021, Oregon experienced a record heat wave that was documented as the second worst natural disaster in our state's history. Many vulnerable children, families, and their communities were further exacerbated by the extreme weather conditions because they did not have access to life-saving, cooling technologies such as air conditioning or heat pumps.

There were 107 heat-related deaths across 28 cities in Oregon in 2021, with the highest recorded in Clackamas County.¹ The extreme weather conditions also heavily placed a strain on health services and hospitals. In one day, Multnomah County Emergency Medical Services received a record of 410 calls for service, resulting in about 260 individuals transported to health care.²

The

Children's

Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.

¹<https://www.opb.org/article/2021/08/06/oregon-june-heat-wave-deaths-names-revealed-medical-examiner/#:~:text=The%20Oregon%20Medical%20Examiner%27s%20Office,extraordinary%20late%2DJune%20heat%20wave>

²<https://www.opb.org/article/2021/06/28/oregon-heat-wave-record-temperatures-health-risk/>



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Records showed that the majority of Oregonians did not have access to air conditioning. Those most impacted by the heatwave and extreme weather conditions are people who are medically vulnerable, particularly seniors, people with disabilities, and infants and young children. Low-income and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities are especially vulnerable to the extreme weather because their neighborhood's building materials absorb more heat due to historic and current disinvestment.³

HB 4058 will help reduce burden on our emergency rooms and public health services, which will help support children and families across Oregon. HB 4058 will:

- Direct \$5 million to Oregon Health Authority to deploy air systems to complete existing wildfire work
- Direct \$10 million to Oregon Department of Energy for efficient heat pump incentives prioritized to low-income and environmental justice communities
- Support exploration to address energy bill spikes due to extreme weather conditions by the Oregon Public Utility Commission

Every community in Oregon should have access to life-saving cooling technology and resources. Immediate action must be taken to help protect children and their communities because heat-related deaths and illnesses are preventable. We urge you to support HB 4058.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

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Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

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View the 2022 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2022-childrens-agenda

³<https://www.npr.org/2021/07/17/1016415960/as-extreme-heat-kills-hundreds-oregon-steps-up-push-to-protect-people>