

HB 4058 Testimony

- Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Nick Johnson, Executive Director of Lake County Resources Initiative or LCRI for short.
- I am here today to testify in support of HB 4058 and the -2 amendments.
- LCRI is a nonprofit organization located in Lakeview. We serve the community of Lakeview, greater Lake County, and other rural parts of Southeast Oregon by supporting our rural economies through sustainable natural resource use. LCRI's primary areas of focus are forestry and energy.
 - Lakeview, the county seat, is a rural, historically underserved, and economically distressed community.
- Part of LCRI's energy programming involves free home energy assessments for residents within Energy Trust of Oregon service territory. Lakeview proper is the only part of the county within Energy Trust service territory with the remainder of the county served by cooperative electric utilities. Natural gas is not available in any part of the county.
 - The purpose of providing free energy assessments is to assist community members with increasing the efficiency of their homes and ensuring they are receiving all available incentives when they are working on energy related projects.
 - During a home assessment, we spend about an hour looking at various features including heating and cooling systems, water heaters, ceiling and wall insulation, windows, and various other things. We completed approximately 25 of these assessments in 2021.
 - A vast majority of the homes we have assessed are reliant on wood burning stoves, kerosene monitors, propane heaters, and space heaters for heating, and most often do not have air conditioning of any kind.
- Reliance on bulk fuels for heating, particularly wood, creates barriers for seniors and people with disabilities in particular. If there isn't firewood available for purchase locally, an alternative can be hard to find due to the physical and equipment requirements of cutting their own firewood.
 - Bulk fuels are also a significant source of emissions and have a particularly significant impact in this town. Lakeview sits at the base of the Warner Mountains which causes an inversion layer over the town. This inversion layer traps in smoke and emissions and can be seen very clearly nearly every day as you drive into the community.
 - As unregulated fuel sources, propane, kerosene, and firewood are volatile in price and create financial barriers. During the winters, I regularly have community members visiting my office and asking if we provide direct assistance paying for fuels, something we unfortunately do not offer.
- For people using bulk fuels, the number one technology we recommend to residents are heat pumps as they are the best option for ensuring reliable heating and cooling.
 - The only downside we see with heat pump technology is the cost of the equipment and installation. Removing this barrier, heat pumps are reliable, inexpensive to operate, and when used in lieu of wood burning stoves, propane, or kerosene for heating, reduce emissions and improve air quality.
 - However, about 70% of Lake County's population is not eligible for Energy Trust incentives, and for those that are, even if maximum incentives are secured for heat

pump installation projects, they are still expensive and beyond the budget of many in our community.

- LCRI supports House Bill 4058 and the -2 amendments, as it would meet a serious need in our community by making heat pump technology broadly available, and in particular, helping to support heat pump deployment to families that are reliant primarily on bulk fuels. It would ensure the most in-need members of our community can stay warm in the winters and safe and cool in the summers.
- Thank you for your time today.