

TO: Chair Sollman Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members

FR: Rachel Levine

DT: March 16, 2023

RE: Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment in Support of SB 868–871

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members,

My name is Rachel Levine and I am a sophomore environmental science major at Willamette University in Salem Oregon. I am writing to you in support of the bill SB 869 which would require new buildings built in Oregon to be built more resilient to climate change and overall more energy efficient. Growing up in California and now currently residing in Oregon, I know all too well the damaging effects of climate change and the havoc it can wreak.

In both California and in Oregon I have been witness to many wildfires and the devastating aftermath. While I am fortunate enough to have never had my house in danger of burning down, I still felt the effects of the fire. For days after wildfires there would be thick layers of smoke and ash surrounding our community and making it almost impossible to breathe outside. Not to mention that forest fires also normally occur during the hottest times of the year, adding more heat pollution to our urban areas. Both my home and my dorm room in Salem are not equipped with proper air ventilation or cooling systems, leaving us with a difficult choice of how to deal with the smoke and heat. Ultimately every time we have chosen to keep all of our windows closed in order to not have to breathe the polluted smoky air. While we certainly suffered through the heat we knew that we were making the right choice by not damaging our respiratory systems, eyes, and much more, with ash and smoke.

At the stage of climate change we are currently experiencing, air conditioning and ventilation has changed from being a luxury to a necessity. In the future, the effects of climate change will only continue to worsen, meaning more heat waves and more forest fires. Those in rural and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately affected by climate change due to their lack of access. Energy efficient and climate resilient buildings are a necessity that everybody deserves access to.

Passing SB 869 would be a step in the right direction towards equitable access to potentially lifesaving infrastructure.