



February 4, 2022

Senator Lieber, Chair  
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: SB 1518 – SUPPORT**

Chair Lieber and members of the Committee,

Climate Solutions is a regional non-profit working to accelerate clean energy solutions to the climate crisis. **We strongly urge the Committee to support SB 1518.** It will establish a pathway for Oregon municipalities, at their individual discretion, to accelerate energy efficiency gains in new construction and major retrofits to existing buildings while maintaining the central role of the Oregon Building Code Division (BCD) and its boards to establish streamlined codes for Oregon. It is also the bill with the greatest potential to reduce climate emissions in the 2022 session.

Buildings are Oregon’s second-largest source of climate and air pollution, predominantly from burning methane gas and other fossil fuels. It is estimated that new homes and buildings built between 2020 and 2050 will account for up to 30% of the building stock and will last for 50-100 years. Accordingly, as we are striving to do in the electricity and the transportation sectors, it is essential that Oregon accelerate bending the curve downward on emissions in the buildings sector. It is also essential that as many new-construction homes, apartments, and commercial buildings are built cleaner and more efficiently from the start as possible, rather than needing expensive upgrades later.

In addition to being a major source of climate emissions, buildings are also our first line of defense from climate harms. As many as 100 people died across 28 Oregon cities during last summer’s unprecedented climate-fueled heat wave. A majority of those people died alone in too-hot apartments. During what is a now-annual wildfire season, families across the state are subject to toxic air pollution from wildfire smoke, even in their homes. With extreme heat events becoming increasingly more common, we cannot wait to act to protect our communities and ensure all homes are resilient. Energy efficient buildings – with features such as better insulation and more efficient windows – help to both reduce energy use and protect households from climate-fueled wildfire smoke and extreme temperatures.

At the same time, energy efficient buildings come with substantial cost savings for Oregon communities. By reducing building energy use, homeowners and businesses can save money on their energy bills over time. At a time of economic recovery, everyone should welcome saving more money, especially our communities hit so hard these past few years.

While we also advocate for overall efficiency improvements to our statewide base residential and commercial codes, we recognize that one size may not fit all communities in Oregon. SB 1518 recognizes this tension and creates a streamlined option, the statewide Reach code, for local governments to adopt. The Reach code will continue to be designed and adopted by BCD staff and its boards, using the same stakeholder and public input processes as the base codes, and would not be developed by local jurisdictions. Ultimately, SB 1518 would help avoid a potentially expensive patchwork of different local building codes via one-off amendments.

BCD and its boards already have the statutory authority to develop a Reach code, which is a voluntary, more energy-efficient code that has existed for over ten years. It is updated on the same 3-year cycle as the statewide residential and commercial codes and is already used by many builders and developers. SB 1518 would simply allow local jurisdictions the option to adopt the Reach code to more quickly reach their emissions reductions targets.

SB 1518 has broad stakeholder support from municipalities, energy and environmental justice organizations, affordable housing advocates, builders, architects, and green building organizations. We have attached a list of many of the organizations in support of SB 1518 this year.

The past few years have made it clear that Oregon communities are vulnerable to a variety of climate harms. While there is a lot of work to do to mitigate emissions and build community resilience, one common-sense and high-reward option that satisfies both goals is to build new homes and buildings more efficiently from the start. Please vote to give our communities this choice by passing SB 1518 this year.

Sincerely,

Meredith Connolly  
Oregon Director  
**Climate Solutions**

Nora Apter  
Climate Program Director  
**Oregon Environmental Council**

Greer Ryan  
Clean Buildings Policy Manager  
**Climate Solutions**

**Local governments in support of SB 1518 include:**

Ashland	Metro Mayors Consortium (23 Mayors)
Beaverton	Milwaukie
Bend	Multnomah County
Corvallis	Portland
Eugene	Salem
Hillsboro	West Linn
League of Oregon Cities	

**Other supporters of SB 1518 include:**

350 Deschutes County	Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)
350 Salem Oregon	Oregon Solar + Storage Industries
350 Washington County	Association
350PDX	PAE Engineering
Birdsmouth Design-Build	Passive House Northwest
Breach Collective	PCUN
Central City Concern	Providence Hospital
Climate Solutions	Renew Coalition
Community Energy Project	RMI
Community for Earth, First Unitarian Church	SAFE Cities at Stand.earth
Dream Home Building and Design LLC	SERA Architects
Earth Advantage Inc.	Sierra Club Oregon Chapter
Edlen & Co.	Solar Oregon
Electrify Now	Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Environment Oregon	Sustainable Northwest
Families for Climate	The Environmental Center of Bend
Green Hammer	The Nature Conservancy
Imagine Energy	Tualatin Riverkeepers
Metro Climate Action Team	Union of Concerned Scientists
New Buildings Institute	Verde
Northwest AeroBarrier	Waterleaf
NW Energy Coalition	ZERO Coalition
Oregon Environmental Council	
Oregon League of Conservation Voters	
Opsis Architecture	
Oregon Business for Climate	