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February 3rd 2022

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

RE: Oregon Senate Bill 1536 - Emergency Heat Relief for Renters

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

My name is David De La Torre, and I am the Healthy Climate Program Director at Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. Guided by the values and expertise of healthcare and public health, Oregon PSR works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. We support Senate Bill 1536 - Emergency Heat Relief for Renters legislation because it protects against health disparities related to climate change during extreme heat events, especially among medically vulnerable, environmental justice, and low-income communities.

SB 1536-1 is an important and necessary step to help reduce the burden on our emergency rooms and public health services and support families across Oregon. According to the Oregon Health Authority, nearly 100 people died as a result of last year's heatwave. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that extreme events such as heat waves are likely to be more common. Our hospitals and clinics are already strained with the COVID-19 pandemic, and extreme heat events like last year's heat wave means that emergency rooms and public health services will continue to experience further increase on demands. We have heard from physicians about their experiences with last year's extreme heat, including that many patients had coexisting dehydration or heat exhaustion which complicated their treatment and increased their risk of poor outcomes, resulting in longer hospitalizations and increased cost.

SB 1536-1 removes barriers for renters to install portable air conditioners. It is significant because cooling devices, along with cooling centers, can limit people's heat exposure, greatly lessening the risk of short and long-term morbidity and mortality. We thus urge you to support SB 1536-1 - Emergency Heat Relief for Renters legislation to increase access to much-needed safe heating and cooling resources during extreme weather events.

Sincerely,

David De La Torre, Healthy Climate Program Director
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility



Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
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