



February 2, 2022

Senate Committee on Housing & Development  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 1536-1

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, 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 SB 1536-1: Emergency Heat Relief for Renters, 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. There were 107 heat-related deaths across 28 cities last year, with the highest recorded in Clackamas County.<sup>1</sup>

Those most impacted by the heatwave and extreme weather conditions are people who are medically vulnerable, particularly Indigenous, Black, and Brown communities, seniors, people with disabilities, and infants and young children. Families and children living in apartments, upper-level multifamily units, or manufactured homes were especially vulnerable. It was found that more than half of those who died from the heat wave lived in apartments or multifamily units, demonstrating that the type of housing people lived in was a clear factor.<sup>2</sup>

**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.*

<sup>1</sup><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>  
<sup>2</sup><https://www.opb.org/article/2021/08/06/oregon-june-heat-wave-deaths-names-revealed-medical->



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Renters are especially impacted because they have less control over how their spaces are cooled and in many cases face unnecessary restrictions around whether they can install portable cooling devices like air-conditioners. SB 1536-1 does a number of important things to provide clarity and strengthen the landlord/tenant relationship around cooling. It's also a necessary step to help reduce burden on our emergency rooms and public health services, which will help support children and families across Oregon. SB 1536-1:

- Remove barriers for renters to install portable air conditioners
- provides \$500,000 through the Oregon Department of Energy for landlords to set up on- or off-site cooling centers
- Require cooling in rentals that are newly constructed or recently renovated
- directs the Oregon Department of Energy to study the opportunities and barriers around ensuring that all affordable housing in Oregon has cooling

Heat-related deaths and illnesses are preventable. Every Oregonian should have access to cooling technology systems that can be potentially life-saving. Immediate action must be taken to help protect families and vulnerable people who are renters by removing barriers to installing these appliances.

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](http://www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2022-childrens-agenda)*