

Oregon State Council



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

6401 SE Foster • Portland, OR 97206

February 9, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and Members of the House Housing Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2842 to create a Healthy Homes Program.

My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am a political organizer with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon State Council. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home child care providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

As members of the Fair Shot For All Coalition, we strongly support this policy as part of the 2021 legislative agenda and the ongoing work for environmental justice in Oregon.

We believe that every Oregonian should have a healthy home to live in—especially as Oregon experiences increasingly dangerous wildfire seasons and navigates a respiratory pandemic. Both disasters that have severely impacted the homes and lives of our members; many of whom are low-income frontline workers.

Despite that belief, 54% of Oregonians live in housing built before 1978 that is energy-inefficient and in need of repairs, weatherproofing, and upgrades for disaster resiliency. Families with low-incomes, families living in rural and tribal communities, and individuals that identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or people of color are the most impacted due to decades of redlining and other discriminatory practices. Consequently, these communities are more likely to experience sick days and hospital visits caused by mold, cold weather, asthma flare-ups, and the inability to take refuge from bad outdoor air quality. All of this is exacerbated by—and more dangerous during—a respiratory pandemic; especially for our frontline members that have been showing up to work every single day.

HB 2842 will create a Healthy Homes program at the Oregon Healthy Authority to provide grants to eligible entities that provide financial assistance to persons in low income households to repair and rehabilitate their residences and to landlords to repair and rehabilitate dwelling units. In turn, a Healthy Homes program will create more equity for our communities and it makes good fiscal sense for our state. HB 2842 will: 1) help low-income families spend less money on heating and cooling; 2) create good local jobs in retrofitting and repairs; 3) provide a refuge from increasingly bad outdoor air quality; 4) reduce burden on hospitals and families by supporting better respiratory health; and 5) reduce the number of sick days for both adults and kids.

Please stand in unity with our members and all working families by supporting HB 2842 to help build an Oregon where everyone lives in a home that is healthy and safe.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU, Oregon State Council