

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

RE: Senate Bill 1536 – Emergency Heat Relief for Renters

Date: 2/2/2022

Chair Jama and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 1536. The tragic consequences of the extreme heat that hit Oregon in the summer of 2021 resulted in over 100 Oregonians dying, many were renters. Previously, I thought climate change would primarily affect other people living in other locations, we were largely safe. I thought taking climate action was the right thing to do save other people from flooding or severe storms. In 2021, I came to the realization that we need to take climate action not just for others, but to save Oregonians from dying preventable deaths from extreme heat brought on by climate change.

In Portland, Earth Advantage is working with the City of Portland and community-based organizations to install 15,000 energy efficient portable heat pump units over the next few years to address the need for emergency cooling in priority households. We believe that policy is a good first step in reaction to the 2021 heat events. Senate Bill 1536 provides for a more comprehensive state-wide policy, which would be another positive step forward in addressing this challenge. Senate Bill 1536 will do multiple things, it:

- Removes barriers for renters to install portable air conditioners, while maintaining building safety and providing alternative compliance for landlords with rental units that can't support air conditioners.
- Helps landlords establish voluntary cooling centers for tenants through funding and technical assistance to expand access more. places to stay cool outside other public and community resources.
- Requires cooling in rentals that are new construction or in specific renovation situations and directs the Oregon Department of Energy to contract with a third party to collect data on the costs and barriers to converting Oregon's affordable housing stock to include cooling.

All of these actions will enable more Oregonians to access life-saving cooling when they need it.

Sincerely,

David Heslam  
Executive Director