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2/18/2021

Re: HB 2398 - Support

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair David Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Helm and Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment:

Verde serves communities by building environmental wealth through social enterprise, outreach and advocacy. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide supportive testimony for HB 2398 which would allow Oregon cities to adopt a uniform reach code to ensure more efficient buildings in our communities.

Verde supports the Cully neighborhood in Portland which includes mostly Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color communities and people experiencing low wealth and low incomes. One of the challenges for many of our community members is high energy burden -- the share of someone's income that goes toward their energy bills. Energy burden is often most severe for people who live in inefficient or unweatherized homes that have an envelope that is not well-sealed or are not well-insulated. HB 2398 is not a mandate and would not require more efficient buildings or raise construction costs in communities where it doesn't make sense, but it would allow cities like Portland to do what is best for their communities.

A reach code, such as the one proposed in HB 2398 would address these problems by allowing new construction, repairs, and retrofits to be held to a standard that is 90% more efficient, a substantial improvement from current Oregon building codes which fall far behind our neighboring states. This means less energy use and lower use charges for the homes that benefit from code improvements.

Portland recently adopted zoning that allows for more density through more accessory dwelling units, and small multifamily dwellings such as duplexes, triplexes. There will be much new construction and also opportunities to retrofit older homes in poor condition. It is imperative that Portland be able to adopt more substantial standards around energy efficiency to ensure equity and maximum energy savings for the families that move into the many new housing opportunities we hope to see in our city.

Energy efficient homes also retain heat better in the winter and stay cooler in the summer and are more likely to keep harmful air out. With the extreme weather events of the past year from fire season to the recent snow and ice storm, the need for housing that can meet these needs is imperative. More so than any grid improvements or type of energy, energy efficiency can reduce load and strain on

the grid and keep people safe and comfortable when power and heating go out. Similarly, it can ensure that people have a refuge from bad air quality.

HB 2398 is a common sense approach to improving building codes where they are most needed and is a strong compliment to other goals around our energy system and new, affordable, housing development -- rent within someone's budget can be counteracted by a bill that puts someone beyond their means, often an unexpected cost that appears when the first monthly bill is opened. It will help the communities that Verde serves as well as many other Oregonians without

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily May".

Energy Climate and Transportation Manager
Verde