

Chair Bynum and members of the committee,

My name is Sophie Cash (she/hers), I'm here with Sunrise PDX. I'm 24, I live in Portland on unceded Clackamas, Cowlitz, and Multnomah land, and I urge you to support HB 2367.

Last summer I was terrified. I've been studying the impacts of climate change since high school but the wildfires last summer was the first time I experienced the terror of an event exacerbated by climate change. I'm sure you all can relate to my fear of evacuating, terror for my loved ones, anxiety over the long term health effects and implications about climate change, and the mental health impacts from the apocalyptic and seemingly interminable situation on top of existing COVID stressors. But I couldn't help thinking every single morning as I looked at the orange sky: if this is how scared I am inside a safe home, how must it be for my houseless neighbors?

As climate change continues to worsen, these types of events will get more intense, longer, and more erratic. Climate change related disasters already force more than 20 million people to flee their homes every year, and that number is rapidly increasing. It's easy to picture these people as running from faraway deserts, but climate refugees exist today, here in the US and in Oregon, some of them from those very same fires. Those numbers are only increasing. Even more imminent, the eviction moratorium will force many more Oregonian families onto the streets.

Folks currently living without a home are forced to experience these events without protection or resources. And as these catastrophes and regular weather continue to get worse, we need to be doing so much more to ensure that people in our city have access to the basic human rights they need to protect themselves. With weather, mental health, vicious cycles of unemployment, risk of sexual violence, racism, and climate change already threatening our houseless neighbors, the last thing they need is the mental and physical burden of being harassed and fearing criminal charges. I wouldn't wish the feeling of terror of an orange sun and smoke in my lungs on anyone — I urge you to protect our neighbors and allow them to better protect themselves by supporting HB 2367. Thank you for your time.