



Health Department

February 11, 2021

House Committee on Housing
900 Court St. NE - Remote D
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2842 - Establishes Healthy Homes Program within the Oregon Health Authority to provide grants to entities to provide financial assistance to low income households and landlords.

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and members of the Committee, my name is Andrea Hamberg and I am the Interim Environmental Health Services Director for Multnomah County Health Department . Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2842.

Multnomah County especially supports the parts of this bill that advance equity. This includes language that makes mobile homes eligible for assistance, as well as the emphasis on prioritizing environmental justice communities. We also recognize the critical role this proposal could have in reducing energy consumption, relieving a financial burden on families while mitigating and adapting to the changing climate.

Safe, affordable housing is foundational for health. Unfortunately, people in our community have limited help available when their homes aren't sound. Environmental hazards in homes lead to adverse health outcomes such as lead poisoning, injuries and chronic asthma. Homeowners and renters regularly call us seeking support with serious problems like mold, dangerous materials like asbestos, and other hazards. Multnomah County used to have home visiting nurses and a rental housing inspector to help manage environmental hazards as well as symptoms of related illness, but those services were lost due to budget cuts.

As September 2020 demonstrated, we also need to help people prepare to keep themselves and their families safe from the hazards of a changing climate. With more extreme heat events and hazardous wildfire smoke days, homes in our communities need both cooling and air filtration to breathe.

Addressing these environmental hazards and critical home repairs contribute to the well-being and economic and housing stability of program recipients and can often be an important factor in preventing displacement. Too often when people call we are at a loss for ways to help, and my staff are in the heartbreaking position of telling desperate people that there are few resources to help them.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,

Andrea Hamberg
Interim Environmental Health Services Director
Multnomah County Health Department