Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
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February 18, 2021

House Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Legislature
500 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 2398

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Helm, Vice Chair Brock Smith, Members of the Committee:

Portland City Council adopted the Climate Emergency Declaration in June of 2020, which commits the City to reduce carbon emissions by at least 50% (below 1990 levels) by 2030 and to achieve net zero carbon emissions before 2050. Additionally, City Council committed to meet 100% of Portland's community energy needs with renewable sources by 2050. In Multnomah County, the building sector is responsible for 40% of carbon emissions.

To meet our decarbonization goals, energy efficiency of new construction must increase faster than the pace of the State's building energy code updates. However, the City of Portland is preempted from adopting more stringent building codes than the State. Although a Local Code Amendment process exists, the outcome is uncertain and could produce multiple different codes if local jurisdictions each seek their own code amendments. HB 2398 avoids a potential patchwork of different codes in different jurisdictions by creating one uniform option to adopt a statewide Reach Code.

HB 2398 ensures that the State's Building Codes Division would consistently update the Reach Code to be at least 10% more energy efficient than Oregon's base code with each residential and commercial code cycle update. HB 2398 would help local jurisdictions, like the City of Portland, meet climate goals by allowing adoption of the Reach Code. The City of Portland supports this bill and proposed amendment-1 ensuring that cities can choose whether to adopt the Reach Code regardless of their respective County or regional government decision.

Although constructing to the Reach Code level may increase the cost of construction, it will significantly reduce the energy burden of the people living in the homes and buildings. Investing in higher energy efficiency, solar ready- and electric vehicle-ready standards at the time of construction prevents more costly retrofits in the future. To help affordability, proposed amendment-4 to HB 2398 would ensure that monetary incentives from the Energy Trust of Oregon are available for local jurisdictions that adopt the Reach Code. The implementation of the Reach Code at the local level will inform cost-effective updates to future statewide base energy codes and help Oregon meet its climate goals.

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HB 2398 is a step in the right direction. We need a statewide Reach Code that enables Oregon's local jurisdictions to lead on building energy efficiency and climate progress. Decarbonizing our building and transportation sectors is critical to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change.

On behalf of the City of Portland, we are asking the State Legislators to help us and help Oregon meet our climate goals by allowing local adoption of the Reach Code. Thank you for the opportunity to submit public testimony and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Andrea Durbin
Director
Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
City of Portland

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