



Senate Housing & Development
Testimony in Support of SB 1536 – Renter Cooling Devices
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February 2, 2022

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With over 500,000 members in Oregon, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families, with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

AARP Oregon supports SB 1536 with proposed amendments as a critical step to protect vulnerable Oregonians from the health risks during extreme weather events, including the very real risk of death. From June 24 to June 29, 2021 the Pacific Northwest endured record breaking high temperatures caused by a heat dome. Several high temperature records were shattered across the state.¹ Portland reached 116 degrees and broke its own record three days in a row.

The results were devastating, especially on the most vulnerable in our community. While we may never know a complete count of those who perished as a result of the heat wave, the data is clear that **more than 90% of the deaths were Oregonians over the age of 50 years.**² While deaths occurred state-wide, the vast majority were in Multnomah County. In its review, Multnomah County determined that of the 54 who died (as determined by the time of the report) more than 50% lived in apartments or multi-family dwellings and 78% lived alone. The one thing in common? The lack of air conditioning. None who perished had central air conditioning. Only 8 had portable units and of those 7 were either unplugged or not working properly. More than half who died had only a fan. However, when temperatures reach that level, fans actually make the situation *worse* by making the body warmer and dryer.³

Extreme weather events and natural disasters such as wildfires are sadly becoming the rule, not the exception. SB 1536 is an important step in addressing the particular challenges of renters. AARP Oregon appreciates the extensive work done by the Chair and others and we urge this committee to adopt the amendments and move SB 1536 to the Joint Committee on Ways & Means.

¹ <https://www.opb.org/article/2021/06/29/perspective-on-the-heat-northwest-was-hotter-than-mojave-desert/>

² <https://www.oregonlive.com/data/2021/07/oregons-heat-wave-death-toll-grows-to-116.html>

³ https://www.opb.org/pdf/preliminary_review-heat_deaths-07-13-21_1626190464400.pdf