



Date: February 2, 2022
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
From: Stephanie Phillips, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Emergency Heat Relief 2022, HB 4058

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Phillips, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 4058. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African-Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

The heatwave in 2021 had severe impacts on Oregonians, particularly those that were low-income, people of color, medically vulnerable, seniors, disabled, and homeless. Temperatures in every county nearly reached or surpassed 100 degrees, with some counties reaching 117 degrees. The heatwave severely impacted people in low-income areas which is predominantly home to people of color. The heatwave and lack of resources for relief led to 96 deaths in 28 Oregon counties; three of those deaths were African Americans all in the Portland Metropolitan area, Jerome Ollison, James McKinley Dutton, and Ashlyn Maddox. Tragically, Ashlyn died right outside of her adult foster care home in Portland after being dropped off by medical transport; the heat was too much, and she sadly didn't make it into her home. These deaths are both tragic and preventable.

In 2021, Oregonians experienced several emergencies simultaneously, the COVID pandemic, wildfires, poor air quality, extremely hot and cold temperatures. There was a lack of resources to support Oregonians during each emergency, leaving many struggling to adapt as each emergency arose. Cooling, air, and heating shelters have become a resource Oregonians are dependent on as their homes are not equipped for such emergencies structurally. The heatwave was not only an issue during the day but included nighttime, making cooling options limited outside of the home. Most housing in Oregon lacks cooling systems as this is not a construction requirement as the highest temperatures fluctuated between 80-99 degrees for decades. Over the last decade, Oregon's weather has become unpredictable with "once in a lifetime" systems occurring frequently, the State is not equipped structurally to accommodate for such extremes. Over the last decade, the highest temperatures have remained in the high 80s-100s degrees. Additionally, many renters are restricted by landlords from installing portable air conditions. Renovating homes/apartments that are not retrofitted for such systems and purchasing equipment is costly, funding is the primary resource needed to provide relief.

HB 4058 will provide relief to Oregonians as it is anticipated the same emergencies will become more prevalent. Funding and resources will be available to support those most impacted by these emergencies; low-income, people of color, medically vulnerable, seniors, disabled, and homeless. With HB 4058, renters will be able to install portable air conditioners while maintaining building safety and providing alternative compliance for landlords with rental units that aren't equipped with air conditioners. Additionally, the bill will provide a right to reasonable accommodation to install cooling devices for medically vulnerable people. HB 4058 will require



cooling in rentals that are new construction or recently renovated, the Oregon Housing and Community Service will collect data on the costs and barriers for the cooling requirement. \$10 million for the Oregon Department of Energy for efficient heat pump incentives prioritized to low-income and environmental justice communities, especially rural communities. \$10 million to Oregon Department of Energy for efficient heat pump incentives for landlords supplemented by a \$5 million revolving loan fund to help address the electrical, mechanical, and other structural barriers to the increased cooling load.

HB 4058 calls for \$5 million to the Oregon Health Authority for emergency air conditioner and air filtration support in conjunction with wildfire work. Air filtration and air conditioners are crucial to safety for households to address air quality and hot temperatures. SB 762 allowed the Oregon Health Authority to use funds to help low-income and medically vulnerable people buy air purifiers, but more funding is needed for this issue. Air quality in low-income areas that tend to be home for people of color is poor, leading to respiratory conditions. With the dangerous smoke caused by wildfires, people of color are at an increased risk when wildfires strike.

Furthermore, funding and resources are essential to provide support for Oregonians outside of their homes and for the homeless. Oregonians sought cooling and warming centers across the state in 2021, but accessibility and availability were maxed out with people still needing help. \$2 million to Oregon Department of Human Services to distribute for communities to establish extreme weather shelters such as cooling centers, warming centers, and air shelters. Lastly, HB 4058 will direct the Oregon Public Utility Commission to explore strategies to address energy bill spikes due to extreme weather events. This is a crucial aspect of HB 4058 as low-income, people of color, medically vulnerable, seniors, and disabled people may need financial resources for their energy bills. With strategies in place to address energy bill spikes, people do not have to decide between their safety and financial burden.

Please pass HB 4058. Oregonians are counting on you to provide relief and support during the emergency weather events that are to come.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Phillips
Policy Analyst
Urban League of Portland
Portland, OR 97227
Phone: 503.740.2607
Fax: 503.281.2612