

RE: Support of SB 1536

Good afternoon Chair Jama, members of the committee;

My name is Alli Sayre and I'm a tenant and the elected organizing coordinator for Portland Tenants United, the Portland city-wide tenant union. Through organizing, direct action, coalition building, and civic engagement, Portland Tenants United fights to keep people in their homes, and to achieve dignity and security for all tenants. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 1536, which would greatly increase the ability of tenants to install window air conditioners in their rental units, ban HOAs and condo associations from arbitrarily restricting the use of window air conditioners, as well as require landlords of larger multi-family buildings to provide cooling options for tenants on days where extreme heat is predicted.

I have personally lived in Oregon over 10 years and my current rental is the first place I have lived that is air conditioned. When I first moved here, it seemed like there was only a week or two a year where it got really hot. Now heat waves come and go the entire summer. Not having air conditioning is not just unpleasant, it can be life threatening. According to the Oregon Medical Examiner's office, there were 12 heat deaths recorded between 2017 and 2019. In 2021, there were at least 107. Almost all of those 107 people were renters.

Renters are literally left to die in situations homeowners would never have to put up with. During a global pandemic where so many tenants were at risk of being evicted for non-payment of rent due to the economic effects of covid, tenants had to weigh the choice between installing air conditioning and getting evicted for a lease violation. Some tenants didn't even get to make that choice because they couldn't afford to buy an air conditioner even if it was allowed. Tragically, that choice or lack thereof lead to many deaths.

I was once that renter; who did not have the option to install window air conditioning and could not afford to purchase a portable air conditioner. I was extremely fortunate that a friend who was moving out of state gave me his. It made a huge difference in my health and mood to be able to have one cool room in my rental unit. I could relax after a long work day and could actually sleep without overheating. Every renter deserves this small dignity and opportunity.

It is immoral and disgusting that a landlord, HOA, or condo association would prioritize aesthetics over lives. Millions of people use window A/C units every year without there being any risk of them damaging the building or falling and hurting someone, which are the common reasons landlords, HOAs, and condo associations use to justify their bans (which to be clear are really based on the fact that window A/C units are ugly to look at). Smarter people than me will probably testify about the fact that not only are window A/C units more affordable than portable air conditioners, they are also much more efficient. That means they are better at cooling the air

and better for the environment because hot air is not leaking into the dwelling unit and diminishing the effectiveness of the air conditioner. They are very commonly available secondhand as well which increases their feasibility for lower-income tenants.

PTU is also thrilled to see the bill's introduction of a requirement for cooling of new and renovated rental housing. We have long been dismayed to see new public housing be built without air conditioning. 10% of the people who died from heat-related causes in 2021 were in subsidized housing. Without this provision there is little incentive for developers of affordable housing to install a/c as they are essentially guaranteed to have 100% occupancy no matter how few amenities they offer. This part of the bill would take a step in the right direction of ensuring tenants of affordable housing have access to the same critical amenities that tenants of market-rate rentals do.

It is sad to see that the legislature feels loans and rebates are necessary to get landlords on board with merely keeping their tenants alive. Landlords are always happy to take handouts yet are resistant when tenants, who actually have jobs and don't just leech off of other people, expect basic things like not burning to death in their apartments. We unequivocally oppose subsidizing landlords who squeeze every last penny out of tenants and then laugh all the way to the bank when they deposit their 6 figure profits from flipping the dwelling unit. We should not be bribing landlords to provide basic services like air conditioning any more than we do for them to provide hot water, electricity, etc. And frankly the inclusion of this component says more than ever that we need real enforcement by the state of ORS 90 instead of the current system where it is up to tenants to ensure that when landlords violate their rights they are being held accountable.

Nevertheless, we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We fully support this bill and respectfully ask that the committee vote **yes** to advance this bill.