



Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: Jennifer Hill-Hart, Policy Manager - Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)

Re: Support for SB 1536

The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB) submits this written testimony in support of SB 1536, Emergency Heat Relief for Renters. This bill will help Oregon residents access lifesaving, energy-efficient cooling systems. CUB advocates for residential customers of utility services. We know energy utility costs can create financial hardships for households, particularly our neighbors that are low-income, elderly, and have disabilities. This is especially true during extreme weather events which often necessitate increased energy usage, leading to sharp increases in residential utility bills. CUB supports SB 1536 because this legislation will help Oregon residents reduce energy costs with lifesaving energy-efficient cooling systems.

High efficiency heating/cooling systems, like heat pumps, can keep Oregonians safe and healthy while saving on their utility bills. Heat pumps are highly energy-efficient alternatives to furnaces and air conditioners. For example, manufactured homes often use energy intensive (and expensive) electric resistance heating. Replacing heat systems with heat pumps can cut up to 50% of a household's electricity use. CUB supports investing in energy efficiency because the cheapest energy dollar is the one you do not have to spend. In addition, efficient equipment reduces the need for the utility to acquire resources, resulting in savings for all customers.

While saving money is important, it is not CUB's only concern. Access to air conditioning at home can be a lifesaving measure. SB 1536 makes heat pumps more accessible to low-income Oregonians, leaving them better prepared for extreme weather events and with lower energy bills. This legislation shows that Oregon is prepared to keep our most vulnerable neighbors safe with energy-efficient options that maintain healthy temperature in homes while keeping utility costs low. SB 1536 will help Oregonians manage this new climate reality and directly supports Oregon families. CUB supports and urges a "yes" vote on SB 1536.