

Testimony Submitted by
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To the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

February 2, 2022

Regarding: Support for SB 1536 with proposed -1 and -2 amendments

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of Oregon Consumer Justice. Launched in 2020, [Oregon Consumer Justice](#) (OCJ) is a nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all people in Oregon experience a safe and fair marketplace, free from predatory and exploitative practices. We are especially focused on those communities that have been historically and systematically excluded or harmed by unfair practices.

Our priorities are guided by community voices, and we strategically focus on opportunities to:

- balance and re-imagine systems by advocating for laws that protect consumers and systems to ensure those laws are effective,
- communicate to shift the narrative about consumer justice and achieve equitable outcomes, and
- build and strengthen consumer access to justice.

Renters are consumers in the housing marketplace, and they need and deserve protections as we collectively grapple with climate change and extreme weather events. Last summer, Oregon experienced a record heat wave. At least 96 people died across Oregon during the 2021 heat dome¹. Most of the people who died did not have access to life-saving cooling technologies like air conditioners and heat pumps

¹ Oregon Health Authority. "Oregon Heat Deaths".
https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.opb.org%2Fpdf%2FOREGON_heat_deaths_revised_1628632311939.pdf

in their homes, and many were renters with low incomes.²

SB 1536 will:

- **Remove barriers for renters to install portable air conditioners**, while maintaining building safety and providing alternative compliance for landlords with rental units that can't support air conditioners.
- **Helps landlords establish voluntary cooling centers for tenants** through funding and technical assistance.
- **Requires cooling in rentals that are new construction or recently renovated** and directs the collection of data on the costs and barriers to converting Oregon's rental housing stock to include cooling.

This proposal has been developed and informed by community members who are most impacted by the lack of heat relief during extreme weather conditions. There has also been an extensive process to incorporate the input from many stakeholders to define solutions that can be implemented as demonstrated through the proposed amendments. We must acknowledge that the occurrence of what we now consider extreme conditions is only going to increase. Now is the time to identify and implement solutions, to prevent needless suffering and deaths in the years ahead.

OCJ believes that SB 1536 is an important piece of a system to provide protections to Oregon renters, and we urge your support of SB 1536 with the anticipated amendments.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to Oregon communities.

² Multnomah County. "Preliminary Review on Excessive Heat Deaths." https://multco-web7-psh-files-usw2.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/preliminary_review-heat_deaths-07-14-21_2.pdf