



Testimony Submitted by
Chris Coughlin, Policy and Legislative Lead
Oregon Consumer Justice
To the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

February 2, 2022

Regarding: Support for HB 4058 with the -2 amendments

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Hudson, 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.

As we collectively grapple with climate change and extreme weather events, we need to develop and implement solutions that provide emergency heat relief to low-income communities. HB 4058 helps lay the foundation by making the following investments:

- **\$5 million** to Oregon Health Authority for **emergency air conditioner and air filtration deployment** to complement existing work to respond to wildfires.

- **\$10 million** to Oregon Department of Energy for **efficient heat pump incentives prioritized to low-income and environmental justice communities, especially rural communities** who utilize bulk fuels like wood, oil, and propane or the electric resistance heating that is found in many manufactured homes.
- Acknowledge that the technologies that keep families safe during heat waves, cold snaps, and bad air quality days can cause energy bill spikes, and work must be done to alleviate this burden, especially for low-income Oregonians.

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. 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.

As a consumer justice advocacy organization, we are particularly interested in the work that is needed to continue to explore strategies to address the challenges to consumers posed by unexpected heating and cooling costs. These demands threaten to destabilize households financially as we experience more extreme weather conditions in Oregon. The very technologies that keep families safe during heat waves, cold snaps, and bad air quality days can cause energy bill spikes and create additional burdens, especially for low-income Oregonians. We support the intentionality in the development of this bill to not be redundant, but rather leverage the work already being done by the Public Utility Commission and others, and build from the implementation of HB 2475 (2021) to identify options.

OCJ believes that HB 4058 is an important piece of how Oregon should approach solutions to addressing extreme weather, focusing on low income communities, elders, those living in manufactured homes and other impacted communities. We urge your support of HB 4058 with the -2 amendments.

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