



February 2, 2022

Re: Support for HB 4058-2, Emergency Heat Relief for Communities

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 4058-2. The Coalition of Communities of Color is an alliance of culturally-specific community-based organizations. Our mission is to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities; and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice, and prosperity.

The unprecedented heat dome that struck the Pacific Northwest in 2021 resulted in the deaths of nearly 100 Oregonians, many of whom were elderly, or low-income folks living in affordable housing without air conditioning. Research has shown that poor people of color in Portland tend to live in neighborhoods that are much hotter than more affluent neighborhoods. This was clear in Multnomah County, where the zip codes with the highest deaths during the heatwave were also predominantly low-income, communities of color. As climate change will continue to strike the communities least equipped to adapt to it, we must establish programs to ensure such a tragedy does not happen again.

HB 4058-2 is a direct response to last summer's tragedy, and a critical adaptation strategy to the extreme weather and natural disasters that we can expect from a climate that is changing rapidly. By allocating funds to deploy air conditioning units and air filtration systems as well as creating a program to deploy highly efficient heat pumps to low-income households, this bill increases accessibility to life-saving technologies that protect those most vulnerable. In addition, HB 4058-2 works to mitigate increases in energy utility costs associated with the use of such technologies, so families do not avoid turning on their AC systems during historic heatwaves in fear of receiving a utility bill they cannot afford.

On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I ask that you support HB 4058-2 in deploying critical heating, cooling, and filtration systems to those most vulnerable during emergencies. Heat pumps, air conditioners, and air filtration systems are essential to preventing illness and death, especially for seniors and those with existing medical conditions or disabilities. HB 4058-2 ensures that these groups, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color throughout the state of Oregon are able to live in homes that keep them cool and safe during hot summers, and warm and healthy during bitterly cold winters.

Thank you,

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