



February 3, 2022

Re: Support for SB 1536, Emergency Heat Relief for Renters

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB SB 1536. The Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) 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 about 100 Oregonians, many of whom were elderly, or low-income folks living in affordable rental housing without air conditioning. CCC, Verde, and Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability partner with other community-based organizations and community leaders from Portland on a project called [Build/Shift](#). In a virtual Build/Shift community convening held with Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the weeks after the heat dome, participants shared their experiences seeking relief to protect themselves and their loved ones from the dangerous temperatures. Many participants were renters, and shared that they were prohibited from their landlords and property managers from installing window air conditioning units or other cooling systems. One participant's apartment even reached 125 degrees inside. When we discussed policy solutions to remove the barriers renters face to safely cool their homes, there was agreement around the need for rental housing to have air conditioning as a requirement.

SB 1536 is a direct response to the needs identified by community members across the state. By supporting landlords in creating cooling centers for their tenants, SB 1536 creates other options for tenants to stay safe in addition to community cooling centers and other public resources. And often, those who rent their homes do not have the ability nor the resources to make decisions or installations that increase the energy efficiency or safety of their homes. This bill protects renters from living in unsafe conditions by removing prohibitions to installing AC units and providing opportunities for landlords to install life-saving, energy efficient heat pumps. Requiring new rental housing and certain renovated housing units to have AC, as well as taking steps to include cooling in Oregon's affordable housing stock, are long-term solutions to ensure renters are kept cool and safe in their homes.

On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I ask that you support SB 1536 in supporting renters and low-income families to access cooling equipment and increase resources to keep Oregonians safe during life-threateningly hot, cold, or smoky days. As our rapidly changing climate threatens us with more heatwaves, ice storms, and wildfires, it is critical that we meet the specific needs of those most vulnerable to support them in withstanding these events.

Thank you,

Nikita Daryanani
Climate and Energy Policy Manager, Coalition of Communities of Color