



Date: February 2, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: Monica Meier, RN

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

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

My name is Monica Meier, I am a registered nurse in Klamath County in southern Oregon. I'm also a member of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) and I belong to its Cabinet on Health Policy. ONA represents 15,000 nurses and nurse practitioners across the state, and we are very intent to endorse this bill, in the principle of helping families be safer in their homes in the face of challenging weather and climate.

We know the harms of high heat. SB 1536 is a public health measure, responsive to a public health danger. I also want to make a point regarding air quality — we have had days and we will have more where children and vulnerable individuals lack circulated, comfortable air.

This is a matter of personal importance to me. As a hospital nurse, I know that people's safe environment can be the one thing that keeps them out of the hospital. So I'm alarmed that my stepdaughter with her small children lives in an apartment that will not allow air conditioning units. Now even if these low-income people have the money for a unit, which is a few hundred dollars, they are threatened with eviction if it is installed. Attempting to get her infant and toddlers comfortable with red faces and sweat on their foreheads as they fitfully sleep is difficult, not to mention *her* being comfortable to sleep and continue her job as a working mom. Facing this and knowing she's not alone, I believe Oregon can do better.

Indeed, she's not alone. The Census Bureau reports 38% of Oregonians are renters. In Klamath Falls the share of residents that are renters is 54.6%. The data has probably not caught up to higher housing costs, so I believe the numbers are higher still. It means half of the population here by law can be denied the comfort of air conditioning, a simple window unit. Also, often being renters, elderly in Klamath Falls are even more prone to this precarity, and we have a large population of retirees in our county.

I think about asthma exacerbation. I think about the ways to prevent emergency visits from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). I think this legislative fix and this approach to public health is a clear problem-solver. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and please join me in supporting SB 1536.