

Submitter: Jennifer Letz

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB1518

I am writing in support of SB 1518. This gives municipalities, like Sisters, the freedom to add more robust energy efficiency building codes. Currently, our region's energy infrastructure is being taxed by growth and the addition of numerous energy-intensive commercial projects, including data centers. Without Counties taking the lead in upgrading energy efficiency requirements, Cities are left with few tools to encourage builders to do the right thing, whether for economic or environmental reasons.

The City of Sisters is actively looking to build more affordable, multi-family housing for our workforce that is either commuting great distances for work or even homeless. Building affordable housing with barely-code elements like thin walls, wall heaters, or low R insulation increases the utility bills of residents, making the affordable housing not so affordable anymore. This can also increase the operating costs of building owners, like non-profits or private investors. That's more money going to utilities instead of being invested in our community - a lose/lose situation.

Sisters does not have natural gas, and Central Electric Cooperative is a BPA utility with limited incentive options compared to those provided by Energy Trust of Oregon. This has made building energy-efficient and economic buildings very difficult, and we have lost projects to other communities with ETO funding. The Reach Code, when coupled with tools like C-PACE (which will most likely be adopted soon in Deschutes County) gives Cities like ours a level playing field and the ability to compete for building projects.

When communities adopt climate or resiliency plans, they become more competitive for outside funding - whether from the State, Federal agencies, or other entities. Without codes that match the goals in the plans, it makes it more challenging for Cities to successfully compete for funding. The smaller the City, the harder it is to amass enough funding to start projects - especially in cities like Sisters that already have sky-high land and construction costs.

Sisters also sits in a high-fire hazard region. There is the potential to create a win/win situation by using materials from fuels-reduction projects in the area to fuel biomass boilers. Adopting codes that encourage or require energy-efficient technologies like this localized solution gives us the ability to make our community more resilient from natural disasters - both near and far.

Finally, communities like ours place a high value on our clean air and environment

and citizens are very vocal about maintaining our quality of life. Ensuring future building projects have as little impact on our resources as possible is a top priority for Sisters.

Please support SB 1518.