



February 7, 2022

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
900 Court St. NE - HR
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 1518 - Relating to Building Codes
Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1518.

Multnomah County is responsible for the health and well being of our community members, and this mandate has been profoundly tested in the past year. A respiratory illness pandemic, climate induced heat waves and noxious wildfire smoke, and freezing ice storms have impacted our community members and the organizations that support them in unprecedented ways.

The resilience of our community is in many ways linked to the quality of our buildings, and particularly our homes. As we contemplate the profound challenge of retrofitting our existing building stock to make it more resilient and efficient, we also must change the way that we are building today to avoid additional costly retrofits in the future. SB 1518 will allow Multnomah County and other communities around the state to choose the REACH code as the minimum efficiency standards for construction. This means that households living in homes of the future will be better able to stay warmer in the winter, stay cooler in the summer, and help limit exposure to toxic wildfire smoke and other air toxics outside.

Adoption of the REACH code locally will also allow us to address critical ongoing health impacts related to our buildings and the combustion of fossil fuels. Like other places, residents of Multnomah County spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors¹. Through the creation of more protective indoor environments and the significant decrease in the use of energy in buildings and the associated air toxics and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, implementation of the REACH Code as a minimum standard will improve community health and help reduce four of the leading causes of death

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 1989. Report to Congress on indoor air quality: Volume 2. EPA/400/1-89/001C. Washington, DC

associated with fossil fuel combustion: cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, heart disease, and stroke. Cancer and heart disease are the leading causes of death for Multnomah County residents, with black residents at higher risk than their white neighbors². This bill and the subsequent adoption of the REACH code locally can positively impact marginalized communities in Multnomah County.

Finally, Multnomah County's 2015 Climate Action Plan (CAP) commits the County to reduce community-wide GHG emissions 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Residential and commercial buildings account for 44%³ of all greenhouse gas emissions produced in Multnomah County, and the 2015 CAP identified strengthening statewide building codes as a key strategy for achieving our local GHG emissions goals. SB 1518 allows for Multnomah County to follow through on that important commitment.

We urge your full consideration and support of SB 1518.



John Wasiutynski, Director
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Brendon Haggerty, Manager (Interim)
Healthy Homes and Communities
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² <https://www.multco.us/multnomah-county/news/county-mirrors-nation-leading-causes-death-and-its-glaring-disparities>

³ <https://www.multco.us/sustainability/news/climate-action-plan-final-progress-report-2020>