



Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Findley and members of the committee,

My name is Yasmin Ibarra. I am a Political Organizer with Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 49, which represents 14,000 workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington, including janitors, security officers and frontline healthcare workers. I'm speaking today in support of SB 870 and particularly want to recommend that amendments to the bill include one related to the Green Janitor education programs certified by the U.S. Green Building Council, which reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions in commercial real estate buildings, while improving job quality for janitors.

Among SEIU Local 49's 14,000 members in Oregon & SW Washington, many are heavily impacted by the climate emergency, whether because their homes are within urban heat islands in Portland, or they are immigrants from places damaged by rising sea levels, wildfires, or extreme weather.

SEIU Local 49 members are **largely from frontline communities** most impacted by the climate crisis: people of color, immigrants, and working-class people. Our members are also well positioned to be on the frontlines, and agents of change, of how we transform our jobs, buildings, and communities for climate resiliency.

We are collaborating with environmental partners to win federal legislation, and at the local level, we are training members in how they can combat the climate crisis, and in their workplaces which is directly connected to the overall goals of SB 870; establishing Building Performance Standards to help improve the energy efficiency of large, energy-intensive commercial buildings.

Janitors are on the front lines of building maintenance. In 2020, SEIU 49 launched a green cleaning certification for janitors, based on the Green Janitor Education Program (GJEP), **a proven model for engaging frontline workers in reducing carbon emissions and creating climate justice.**

The Green Janitor program began through dialogue between SEIU and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and teaches janitors the fundamentals of green building practices. It is a 30-hour course certified by the USGBC covering Leadership Energy Efficiency and Design (LEED) in commercial office buildings, energy efficiency, water efficiency, recycling and waste stream management, health and safety, and green cleaning practices. This program was jointly developed in California by the Building Skills Partnership, janitorial employers, and building owners and managers.

USGBC-LA has called it "the least expensive and easiest method" to reduce energy & water usage. A research study in California found that buildings with certified Green Janitors used 5.6% less energy. Research has also shown a positive ripple effect, as janitors apply and share their knowledge of energy efficiency and green practices with their families and communities.

More than 1,000 janitors have completed the Green Janitor program across California, Washington, Colorado, New York since 2017, and so far in Portland, we have 45 graduates since launching the program in collaboration with building owners Unico and American Assets Trust and janitorial contractors ABM and Able. **The Green Janitor program is a model for climate equity – where frontline workers of color and immigrants are leading the fight against climate change, while improving job quality standards and doing so in partnership with the Commercial Real Estate Industry. Since completing the initial pilot programs in downtown Portland we have had institutions from around the region, including those outside of the**

1-800-955-3352  
MAIN OFFICE

503-238-6692  
FAX

3536 SE 26<sup>TH</sup> AVE  
PORTLAND, OR 97202

@SEIU49  
TWITTER

SEIU LOCAL 49  
FACEBOOK

WWW.SEIU49.ORG

**commercial real estate sector, asking about bringing the training to their buildings. This quote from Unico, one of Portland's largest commercial real estate owners, speaks to the value of programs like this:**

"We pursued the Green Janitorial Certification because it aligns with our efforts to prioritize sustainability and wellness in the workplace," said Unico's Keren Eichen in a news release. "Our janitorial staff are the eyes and ears of the building, and they are absolutely essential to the successful, sustainable operations of our properties."

These programs work because we have building ownership invested and we have frontline workers, and their experience, centered.

Because the Green Janitor education programs are a proven and growing model, we recommend an addition to Section 3, subsection (3): a new subsection (b) stating "The department may, as part of the program described in (b) of this subsection, encourage eligible building owners to adopt the Green Janitor education programs certified by the US. Green Building Council."

This amendment would simply name one new and valuable program the department *may* encourage, from a menu of options for reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. The amendment would *not* require building owners to adopt the program, nor would it preclude the department from encouraging any other program or practice.

Highlighting trainings certified by the U.S. Green Building Council is important, because they verifiably teach janitors to identify and address energy and water waste, in contrast with the many janitorial services that claim to provide "green" cleaning without providing meaningful training.

We recognize and applaud the tremendous work that the coalition on Building Resilience has done to bring forward this policy package and we are thrilled to partner with future building owners to continue growing Oregon's first Green Janitor Program to jointly achieve the goals of reducing carbon emissions in large commercial buildings in Oregon.