

Submitter: Serena Lim  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Dear Legislators,

I'm writing to express support for four bills that would promote greater social and environmental responsibility in the building design, development, and construction fields:

- SB 868, which would increase the availability of healthier, more efficient heating and cooling methods in homes;
- SB 869, which would update Oregon's building code and require buildings to be more energy efficient, resilient, and healthy from the start;
- SB 870, which would reduce energy waste and consumption by adopting a performance standard applicable to commercial buildings; and
- SB 871, which would reduce barriers to improving the energy efficiency of public buildings.

Architects and designers of the built environment generally aspire to design buildings that exceed energy standards and optimize the health, comfort, and wellbeing of future occupants, but unfortunately, client budgets usually dictate that projects are designed and built to meet minimum code standards, and current building and energy codes are not enough to meet climate goals. Again and again, I've heard the people I work with say that the most effective way to change the building industry is through regulation.

These four bills would accelerate the building industry's efforts to create buildings that are more energy efficient and socio-environmentally responsible. And while new construction offers the opportunity to meet higher standards from the get-go, retrofitting and reusing existing building stock is by far the most environmentally responsible way to develop places where people live and work, and adapt to cities' changing needs, because it avoids wasting the structural materials present in existing buildings and avoids the majority of carbon-intensive production and transportation of new materials associated with new construction. Did you know existing buildings are responsible for nearly 40% of global carbon emissions? Sadly, the careful work of retrofitting buildings is typically more costly than demolishing them and building something new, which brings with it the waste of demolition, the loss of historic/cultural urban fabric, and the hefty environmental price tag of new construction. For these reasons I urge you to support these and any future legislation that would incentivize and/or subsidize retrofitting existing buildings to be healthier and more energy efficient.

Thank you for your time and consideration.