



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

March 17, 2025

Senator Khanh Pham, Chair  
Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
900 Court St NE, S-409  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Support for SB 54**

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony, on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, in strong support of SB 54 which requires landlords with 10 or more dwelling units to provide cooling resources to residents when the weather outside is over 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to low and very low-income older adults, age 55 and over, experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County. In the past five years, NWPP has seen the impact of rising temperatures on our clients, who are especially vulnerable to the heat due to their age and disabilities. SB 54 would provide much needed cooling resources for our clients at risk of serious health issues during heat waves.

In the past four years, Oregon summers have trended hotter and warmed by 3 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>1</sup> The consequences of this warming were demonstrated during the heatwave of 2021 in which 100 Oregonians passed away, many of whom were found alone, without air conditioning.<sup>2</sup> In Multnomah County, the average age of those who passed away during the 2021 heat wave was 70 years old.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that older adults are more likely to have chronic health conditions and take medications that could lead to a higher risk of illness and death during heatwaves.<sup>4</sup> An air conditioning unit can mean the difference between life and death for an older adult during heat waves.

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<sup>1</sup> Monica Samayoa, "Oregon is getting hotter. This heat wave could break records," OPB, July 3, 2024.

<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/07/03/oregon-getting-hotter-record-breaking-heat-wave-climate-change/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Dutchen, "The Effects of Heat on Older Adults," *Harvard Medicine Magazine*, 2021.

<https://magazine.hms.harvard.edu/articles/effects-heat-older-adults>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

An Oregon Department of Energy study published in 2023 found that people in publicly-supported housing often lack sufficient cooling in their homes.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, according to a Multnomah County report, Black, Indigenous, and people of color were the most likely to have health needs from heat related events that required hospital care in 2023.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it is evident that the most vulnerable members of our population have their health put at risk due to the rise in temperatures.

We urge you to support SB 54 because the cooling centers and devices provided to renters will directly impact NWPP clients that do not have sufficient access to air conditioning devices and have had their health suffer without them. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Yoni Kahn  
Advocacy Director  
Northwest Pilot Project

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<sup>5</sup> Monica Samayoa, "Oregon is Getting Hotter. This Heat Wave could Break Records," OPB, July 3, 2024.  
<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/07/03/oregon-getting-hotter-record-breaking-heat-wave-climate-change/>

<sup>6</sup> Lauren Dake, "Heat Waves are Hitting Oregon's Oldest Population the Hardest," OPB, August 18, 2024.  
<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/08/15/heat-waves-weather-older-elderly-health-aging>