



The Climate Reality Project[®]

PORTLAND CHAPTER

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the committee,

My name is Helena Birecki and I am writing on behalf of Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter in support of SB 54, a bill which would provide life-saving access to cooling during heat waves for renters in multi-family buildings 10 units or larger. As climate change continues to impact the health of Oregonians by increasing high temperatures, overnight temperatures, and lengthened heat waves, we join the Oregon Just Transition Alliance and many other organizations in asking that the effective date for the bill be as soon as possible.

Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter advocates for climate justice and public health, and the provisions of this bill supports both. As other testimony already published on OLIS states, when it's 80 degrees outside, it could be 95 degrees or more inside, especially in an upper floor apartment. In fact, a Detroit-based study found that the average indoor temperature in homes without air conditioning was nearly 25 degrees fahrenheit (13.8 C) higher inside than outside¹. Especially when coupled with humidity as is common in the Portland Area, those are dangerous conditions², especially for individuals who are elderly, babies or young children, or have pre-existing health conditions.

We would like to highlight that SB 54 is flexible and would allow landlords to bring in portable cooling units, eliminating the need for building retrofits or increased electrical capacity. This means that there is limited cost to the landlord for this potentially life-saving benefit to residents.

Oregon's legislature can further support the swift and affordable implementation of this bill by reinvesting in the Rental Home Heat Pump Program. The first round of funding for the Rental Home Heat Pump Program helped accomplish over 2,961 projects across 22 counties, with nearly half the funds targeted at low- and moderate-income rental properties and affordable housing sites including rented mobile homes and RVs.³ Reinvesting in this crucial program would allow small landlords to comply with SB-54 and provide needed cooling without raising rents.

¹ <https://www.elevatenp.org/wp-content/uploads/Summer-Indoor-Thermal-Conditions-1.pdf>

²

<https://www.psu.edu/news/research/story/humans-cant-endure-temperatures-and-humidities-high-previously-thought>

³ <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/287908>

The Rental Home Heat Pump program is an example of how Oregon has been a national leader in policies that help Oregonians afford to live safely in their homes. Please continue that good government with the passage of SB 54.

Thank you for your leadership,
Helena Birecki
Interim Chair, Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter

About The Climate Reality Project Portland Chapter

The Climate Reality Project (CRP) Portland Chapter is a local, volunteer-led chapter of The Climate Reality Project, an international nonprofit of 5 million members led by climate leader and former US Vice President Al Gore, whose mission is to catalyze global solutions to the climate crisis. Our legislative committee bases its advocacy on CRP's 5 pillars: a just transition to clean energy, zero carbon transportation, climate justice and public health, green communities, and a fair, representative democracy. climaterealitypdx.com/, www.climaterealityproject.org