

Submitter: Peter Fargo
On Behalf Of: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB54

Good afternoon, my name is Peter Fargo, and I serve as the Environmental Justice Coordinator at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO).

EMO is a statewide association of faith organizations, interfaith partners, and hundreds of congregations – all working together to improve the lives of Oregonians. Our direct service programs include but are not limited to:

- * immigrant and refugee services
- * the Northeast Emergency Food Pantry, which provides fresh food and pantry staples for over 1,000 families every week
- * our Air Conditioning Program, which has installed 470 AC units since 2023 for people who need cooling and need financial assistance to acquire it. This work is funded by the Portland Clean Energy Fund in partnership with Earth Advantage.

EMO supports SB 54 for the simple reason that all Oregonians need a safe place to live. Given the growing intensity of summer heat, cooling for renters is essential. Oregon should join nearly half the States in the Union in requiring cooling for renters.

SB 54 is an important step forward in and of itself. However, EMO would like to see the bill strengthened. Please find our constructive comments below in five areas:

1) Why does the bill only apply to properties with 10 or more units? Whether people are living in a rental house or in an apartment building with nine units, we want them to be protected from heat.

2) Why do we need to wait 10 years for the law to go into effect on January 1, 2036? Our communities are already facing above-average temperatures every summer and record-breaking heat waves have become the norm. Renters need cooling as soon as possible.

3) How will the state help lower-income landlords to make this AC investment? This is a state-imposed cost on landlords, who are being asked to privately mitigate the public problem of heat. Landlords with fewer assets and lower incomes will pay a higher price, proportionately. As such, the law can be viewed as a regressive tax on lower-income landlords. The state should offset the impact on landlords by providing need-based tax breaks, low-to-zero-interest financing, and technical support.

4) Will the state hold large polluters responsible for these costs? Landlords are not

responsible for dangerous heat — large polluters are responsible for the additional heat-trapping gases in our air. Can the bill acknowledge responsible parties, funds, and state programs that will hold polluters responsible, such as Oregon's Climate Protection Program?

5) Can this bill, or a companion bill, address smoke filtration along with cooling? Many Oregon residents are suffering from heat and smoke inhalation at the same time. Both have serious health implications. Because many AC technologies filter the air, we should require cooling that also removes particulate matter from indoor air.

Thank you for considering EMO's input, and please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.