

Submitter: KATHALEEN PARKER  
On Behalf Of: Rogue Climate  
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB54  
Re: SB54 Relating to cooling for residential tenancies.

To: Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 54, which mandates the provision of indoor cooling or access to cooling spaces for residential tenants.

SB54 is a measure requires landlords to provide residential tenants with indoor cooling or cooling spaces for multiunit buildings with 10 units or more.

It requires, by January 2036, that all landlords provide indoor cooling.

SB54 requires landlords operating multi-unit structures of ten units or more to provide cooling via adequate cooling methods— central air conditioning, heat pump, passive-cooling design techniques, or a portable air conditioning device that is provided by the landlord— to each bedroom of the dwelling on any day where there is an outdoor temperature of more than 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

SB54 defines adequate cooling methods as those capable of cooling and maintaining a room temperature at least 15 degrees cooler than the outside temperature, or 80 degrees, whichever is cooler. Allows, as an alternative, that a landlord can provide access to a community cooling space capable of maintaining temperatures at least 15 degrees cooler than the outside temperature, or 80 degrees, whichever is cooler.

In the city of Portland, the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) has been instrumental in providing funding opportunities for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate resiliency initiatives.

Heat pumps are generally more energy-efficient than central air conditioners, especially for both heating and cooling, as they move heat rather than generating it, leading to lower energy consumption and potentially lower utility bills.

What is a Heat Pump?

A heat pump transfers heat using a refrigerant cycle to move heat from one place to another. A mini-split system is a type of heat pump, specifically a "ductless" or "air-source" heat pump, and it's designed to provide both heating and cooling, just like a traditional heat pump, but without the need for ductwork.

Oregon's historical mean for total summer days with a heat index of over 90 degrees

Fahrenheit is 13; by mid-century, this average is expected to grow to 25 to 48 days. In 2021, 96 Oregonians died in heat-related deaths, and a heat-wave in June of 2024 killed at least another six.

As a senior citizen in Oregon, I support SB54 because extreme heat is an environmental health equity concern disproportionately affecting low-income older adults and people of color. Exposure factors, such as living in rental housing and lack of air conditioning, and sensitivity factors, such as chronic disease and social isolation, increase mortality risk among older adults.

Along with older people, young people also face multiple barriers to adaptive heat mitigation, particularly those living in historically temperate climates.

From a 2016 study of heat affecting young people, (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29990359/>) cognitive function deficits resulting from indoor thermal conditions during heatwaves extended beyond vulnerable populations. Their findings highlight the importance of incorporating sustainable adaptation measures in buildings to preserve educational attainment, economic productivity, and safety in light of a changing climate.

With climate change, Oregon's heat extremes are on the rise, SB54 makes cooling an "essential service" for residential tenants. Sunsets, on January 1, 2036, the requirement that the Housing and Community Services Department provide cooling information for landlords.

As you create budgets this year and consider SB54, please reinvest, so that reliable cooling equipment like heat pumps can be distributed across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.