



February 28, 2022

Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Sanchez, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I write to you on behalf of Home Forward, the Public Housing Authority (PHA) for Multnomah County, in strong support of Senate Bill 1536A. Home Forward is the largest provider of affordable housing in the State of Oregon and we serve more than 15,500 households earning low-incomes by providing affordable housing and administering rent assistance.

During the extreme heat event of June 2021, at least 96 Oregonians died from hyperthermia. Home Forward was devastated that five residents died at home during this unprecedented weather event; they were all at properties with air conditioning in community rooms. This is a testament to the new climate reality we are living in: residents need more accessible cooling options. Home Forward supports the various provisions in this bill to remove barriers to renters accessing cooling in their units, including the renter's right to portable cooling devices as outlined in Section 2.

Home Forward also supports and greatly appreciates the provisions in Senate Bill 1536A that actively outline a path forward to adding cooling technologies to buildings systemwide. Specifically, Home Forward supports:

- The requirement to include cooling in each unit in new construction (Section 9);
- The various allocations to support electrical upgrades and heat pump installation in existing buildings; and
- The Cooling Needs Study.

The Cooling Needs Study in particular will help inform an estimate of the true cost of adding cooling technologies to existing buildings. We urge the committee to consider providing technical assistance to affordable housing providers who want to voluntarily estimate the costs and barriers to adding cooling technologies to all of their buildings. Supporting these more detailed cooling needs studies would both support the Cooling Needs Study required by Section 19 and would be the first step for affordable housing providers to get a specific plan in place to transition their portfolios.

Everyone deserves a place to call home and we take the responsibility of keeping the communities we serve safe. The transition to providing cooling in all existing buildings will require statewide

leadership and a significant investment, especially to support the transition in existing affordable housing. We are eager to partner with you in making this transition.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in support of Senate Bill 1536A. Please contact Taylor Smiley Wolfe, Director of Policy and Planning, Home Forward at 503-957-8760 or taylor.smileywolfe@homeforward.org regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

Taylor Smiley Wolfe
Director of Policy and Planning
Home Forward