



February 11th, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and Members of the House Housing Committee,

UFCW Local 555 supports HB 2842 to create a Healthy Homes program. As members of the Fair Shot For All Coalition we support this policy as part of the 2021 legislative agenda and the ongoing work for environmental justice in Oregon. At UFCW Local 555 we represent over 25,000 workers in Oregon and Southwest Washington in several industries, including retail, meatpacking, healthcare, and more. UFCW Local 555 workers are a diverse group that have grown into the largest private sector labor union in Oregon, and we are proud to be a strong collective voice for working people.

As union members, we believe in creating structures in all parts of society that promote fairness, equal opportunity, and that help everyone achieve a more livable and stable life. That's why we believe that every Oregonian should have a healthy home to live in—especially as Oregon experiences increasingly dangerous wildfire seasons and navigates a respiratory pandemic.

Right now, 54% of Oregonians live in housing built before 1978, and often those homes are energy-inefficient and in need of repairs, weatherproofing, and upgrades for disaster resiliency. This impacts families with low-incomes, families living in rural and tribal communities, and individuals that identify as Black, Indigneous, Latinx, or people of color the most often, due to decades of redlining and other discriminatory practices. Because of factors like these, our communities are more likely to experience sick days and hospital visits caused by mold, cold weather, asthma flare-ups, and the inability to take refuge from bad outdoor air quality. All of this is exacerbated by, and more dangerous during, a respiratory pandemic where many lower wage workers have been drafted onto the front lines as essential, facing the risk of exposure daily.

Our housing quality problem is harming everyday people who are already hurting. This is only made that much worse by—and more dangerous during—a respiratory pandemic.

HB 2842 creates a Healthy Homes program at the Oregon Healthy Authority to provide grants to eligible entities that provide financial assistance to persons in low income households to repair and rehabilitate their residences and to landlords to repair and rehabilitate dwelling units.

Creating and funding a Healthy Homes program creates more equity for our communities and makes good fiscal sense for our state. HB 2842 will help low-income families spend less money on heating and cooling; create good local jobs in retrofitting and repairs; and reduce the burden on families and our healthcare system by supporting better respiratory health.

Please vote yes on HB 2842 to help build an Oregon where everyone lives in a home that is healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Thomas Mosher,
UFCW Local 555, Director, Government and Community Affairs