



To: Members of the House Committee on Housing
From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network
Date: February 8, 2021

RE: Support for HB 2842 – the Healthy Homes Bill.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 2842. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon Conservation Network's strong support to create a Healthy Homes program – because every Oregonian deserves a safe and healthy home.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. OCN is a coalition of 35 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations, the Oregon Chapter Sierra Club being one. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

This is an environmental justice issue – families with low incomes, families living in rural and tribal communities, and people that identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or other people of color are the most impacted by unhealthy and unsafe housing due to decades of redlining and other discriminatory practices. Consequently these 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 (particularly from wildfires). All of this is, of course, exacerbated by a global pandemic that attacks the respiratory system. Additionally 54% of Oregonians live in housing built before 1978; housing that's energy-inefficient and often in need of repairs, weatherproofing, and upgrades for disaster resilience – we must act to ensure all Oregonians are able to make their homes safe and healthy to live in, not just those who can afford it.

In 2017, Oregonians spent \$28 million on asthma-related hospital visits a number can only imagine went up with severe wildfire smoke we experienced during the Labor Day fires last year. Thirty-two percent of children live in energy burdened homes and asthma is the leading cause of missed school days.

Every day Oregon's housing quality problems are harming people who are already struggling, and puts a burden on our healthcare system. An issue made worse by 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: 1) help low-income families spend less money on heating



and cooling; 2) create good local jobs in retrofitting and repairs; 3) provide a refuge from increasingly bad outdoor air quality; 4) reduce burden on hospitals and families by supporting better respiratory health; and 5) reduce the number of sick days for both adults and kids.

The 35 organizations that comprise OCN urge you to please vote yes on HB 2842 to help build an Oregon where everyone lives in a home that is healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Julia DeGraw
Oregon Conservation Network
Oregon League of Conservation Voters Coalition Director

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon | Audubon Society of Portland | Beyond Toxics | Cascadia Wildlands | Center for Biological Diversity | Central Oregon Landwatch | Climate Solutions | Engineers for a Sustainable Future | Defenders of Wildlife | Environment Oregon | Friends of Mount Hood | Friends of the Columbia Gorge | Friends of Mt. Hood | Greater Hells Canyon Council | League of Women Voters of Oregon | Native Fish Society | Neighbors for Clean Air | Oceana | Oregon Coast Alliance | Oregon Environmental Council | Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility | Oregon League of Conservation Voters | Oregon Natural Desert Association | Oregon Land and Water Alliance | Oregon Wild | Renewable Northwest | Rogue Riverkeeper | Trout Unlimited | Tualatin Riverkeepers | Rogue Valley Audubon Society | Sierra Club Oregon Chapter | Surfrider Foundation | Umpqua Valley Audubon Society | WaterWatch of Oregon | Wild Salmon Center