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February 1, 2022

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Senate Interim Committee on Housing and Development

Chair Jama and Committee Members,

Committed to mutual respect and understanding, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and Oregon Interfaith Power and Light (OIPL) brings together communities of faith to learn, serve, and advocate for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Through a membership of 15 denominations and over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, EMO serves hundreds of thousands of diverse members of the faith community all across the state.

We urge you to support SB 1536, a bill that will protect the health and safety of Oregon families by removing barriers to adopt life-saving cooling technologies for renters, many of whom are low-income.

As people of faith, we are united by a core and common obligation to serve one another and the Earth. We are compelled to stand up for our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, who experience the dangerous effects of climate change first and worst. In last summer's unprecedented climate-fueled heat wave, at least 96 Oregonians died and countless others suffered across 28 Oregon cities. The majority of those people died alone in overheated apartments because they did not have access to life-saving cooling technology.

Scripture tells us that the home is an essential foundation for building virtuous societies: "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isaiah 32:18). Yet in last summer's heat wave, it was clear that many of our neighbors' homes were not adequately equipped to provide refuge from deadly weather conditions.

As extreme heat and wildfire events become increasingly common in summers to come, SB 1536 will help ensure our most vulnerable communities are prepared for and protected by removing barriers for renters to install portable air conditioners, helping landlords establish voluntary cooling centers for tenants, and requiring cooling in rentals that are new construction or in specific renovation situations.

We hope and pray your legislative deliberations maintain focus on caring for all Oregonians, especially low-income families and renters, environmental justice communities, seniors and people with disabilities, who are most at risk during extreme heat and wildfire events.

Sincerely,

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon / Oregon Interfaith Power & Light,
Creation Justice Programs