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On Behalf Of: Elders Climate Action-Oregon
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure: SB1518

I'm a native Oregonian, a climate activist and a futurist. Buildings can expect to live a century. My family home was built in 1926 by my grandfather, in Milwaukie, starting as a 3-room cabin. It was substantially upgraded several times, but its original construction defined its life. I sold it about 1995, but it is still occupied.

We can also expect new buildings to last a century, although a huge change in building construction and repair must be implemented before a quarter-century, to make buildings carbon free by 2050. The impact of this bill will help, but we will need far more aggressive sustainability measures to reach that target.

Unfortunately, too many of our residents see that "business as usual" has benefitted them, and believe continuing that pattern is in their best interest. Perhaps, but it is certainly not in the best interest of their grandchildren. Planning is all about preparing for a better future, and building codes are a mechanism to insure quality construction. Unfortunately, many people would rather increase quantity of construction. But there are limits to growths in quantity, as demanded by the laws of physics (which I will not address here). There are, however, no known limits to quality growth, and SB 1518 is a strategy to raise quality.

I do have one technical concern, that might be addressed as the Reach Code is developed. The last word of Section 4 is "repaired." Construction constantly needs repairs, some quite small. (e.g. Gresham requires a building permit to install an electrical outlet.) Energy efficiency projects are typically major. Would a small repair trigger the demand for an energy improvement? (Note that Gresham has been startlingly unambitious in specifying energy efficiency in its new construction projects. SB 1518 would help.) Gresham still thinks economic development that increases population is a good strategy. It has been effective at increasing its quantity, while allowing its quality to degrade.

I also wonder if "Reach Code" should be defined.
Thank you.