



TO: Chair Sollman Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members
FR: Paige Hopkins, Climate Justice Organizer
Teryn Yazdani, Staff Attorney & Climate Policy Manager
DT: March 15, 2023
RE: **Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment in Support of SB 868–871**

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Beyond Toxics, a state-wide environmental justice nonprofit, and thousands of our supporters across the state, we are writing to express our strong support of Senate Bills 868, 869, 870, and 871 (the Resilient, Efficient Buildings Policy Package or REBuilding Package). Beyond Toxics has been an active participant in policy decisions related to climate justice for over twenty years, and we are deeply invested in policies that promote environmental justice principles. We are proud to be part of a broad coalition of labor, builders, public health, affordable housing, environmental justice, local government, and climate experts across Oregon eager to see the legislature advance Resilient, Efficient Buildings. Passing this suite of bills is a necessary step in fighting the climate crisis while supporting healthy, affordable, and resilient communities here in Oregon.

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time, and Oregon is already experiencing several adverse impacts including unprecedented heat domes and climate-fueled wildfires. While these events impact all Oregon families and communities, they affect our frontline communities first and worst. The effects of climate change disproportionately fall on low-income, rural, and communities of color who lack vital access to climate-resiliency resources, limiting their ability to prepare for and recover from climate-field disasters.

Oregon's frontline communities bear the brunt of the climate crisis by shouldering higher costs for housing and utilities in addition to public health impacts from climate change. Low-income and people of color households are disproportionately impacted by unhealthy and inefficient housing and schools. Further, these communities can spend up to three times as much on energy in part because they are more likely to live in older, less efficient buildings. Homes and buildings are our first line of defense against climate harms like extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Energy-efficient buildings keep wildfire smoke and other outdoor air pollution out while helping to regulate indoor temperatures. This would allow community members to be more health-protective against heat and air pollution during the Summer and wildfire season. The legislature must address these issues to ensure equitable access to healthy heating and cooling for all; not everyone has the same ability to update their homes.

Building efficiencies are key to ensuring energy affordability and saving families money on utility bills. More efficient, all-electric homes and builds can reduce costs for both construction and operation. For instance, studies found that new all-electric homes in the Northwest can save \$4,300 over 15 years compared to a house relying on gas. This dollar savings is a low estimate as prices for fossil fuels are expected to increase in the near term. We must build our homes to be more energy efficient from the start and remove any barriers for our community members wanting to improve their homes to waste less energy and protect themselves from wildfire smoke and extreme heat. We need policies in place that support building all-electric with heat pumps and make it more affordable to live in homes and buildings that waste less energy. The first step is to stop making these problems worse.

SB 868, Healthy Heating and Cooling for All, is particularly important to Beyond Toxics. Oregon has many disparate programs dedicated to energy efficiency upgrades, home health, and safety improvements; however, the goals of these programs and their qualifications are unaligned with one another and our state's climate goals. SB 868 is a solution that will align all of Oregon's energy efficiency programs related to resilience and greenhouse gas emissions in homes and buildings with our state's climate goals. It will also set a new heat pump deployment target for Oregon, prioritizing low-income and environmental justice communities for new heat pump installment. While all portions of the REBuild Package are of the utmost importance, this bill in particular will have tangible, positive impacts on Oregon's frontline communities.

This legislature must make the most of this unprecedented opportunity to take equitable climate action. Thank you for your time, and please vote "Yes" on passing the Resilient, Efficient Buildings Policy Package, SB 868–871.

Sincerely,

Paige Hopkins
Climate Justice Organizer

Teryn Yazdani
Staff Attorney & Climate Policy Manager