

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and members of the committee,

I write in support of SB 868, Amendment 1 to increase usage of heat pumps. At this time of unprecedented weather events, homes are under increased stress to keep us safe and comfortable. This bill will go a long way to improving the safety and efficiency of our homes, and improving the health disparities suffered by many from inadequate home systems.

Everyone I know who has installed heat pumps in their homes has found them to be a tremendous improvement over their prior heating and cooling units. Heat pumps save money and reduce energy use. Getting them into more homes in Oregon needs to be a priority. This will be a major assist to our meeting our goals for reducing pollution that damages the climate.

Many Oregon residents are not able to afford air conditioners despite the horrendous heat we have experienced and that we expect to become more frequent. Being low-income should not be a death-sentence. Also, many low-income folks pay a huge portion of their monthly income to maintain heat in the cooler months due to inefficient systems. This bill will improve those inequities.

Reducing the use of polluting energy sources will improve our air quality, another source of disparity since impacts of poor air quality are unfairly distributed.

This bill stems from the Resilient Efficient Buildings Task Force created in 2022 by Senate Bill 1518. It will align programs that address home heating and cooling with our climate goals. It will maximize usage of State and Federal funding for this topic. It will create a target to installing heat pumps by 2030, thereby creating certainty in the marketplace and supporting businesses expanding or moving into this field. It will create a much-needed one-stop-shopping avenue for consumers. It will expand the workforce in this area as a source of clean livable jobs.

I urge your votes for this important bill.

Sincerely,

Joseph Stenger MD
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