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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB868

Testimony Building Resilience

My name is Rene Braga and I'm a Rogue Valley community organizer with Unite Oregon. I'm an Immigrant, a father, a brother and a son to a woman that lost her home and everything she owned in the Almeda Fire, back in 2020.

We didn't know that hundreds of Latinx families with 35+ years of living, working and serving our Rogue Valley, would still be so invisible in times of hardship.

We didn't know that we were so vulnerable to disaster. Little or much of what we had built through decades of hard, unrecognized, underpaid, undervalued work and labor, was decimated to ashes in just a matter of hours, it was as if the building were made out of paper, more Resilient, Efficient Buildings, mean better health, lower costs, less pollution, safer communities, and a more livable future for young Oregonians. All Oregonians

We have learned that we can't just rely on asking those in positions of power and influence to listen and act when it is needed, to get things moving when it's imperative to do so, not only when enough pressure has been built to make the appropriate moves, that often happens once communities have suffered and have left this region as it has happened in my community in the Rogue Valley. We have learned that we need to be in those spaces to bring the sense of urgency into those meetings, bring the needs of our community into the rooms where the conversations for the distribution and administration of funds are being discussed, be at the table and advocate for those that cannot advocate for themselves.

That is why we need to take action in Oregon, so all our homes and buildings are more resilient to protect us from climate harms. We need to make sure new construction is built smart from the start and remove barriers for all Oregonians who want to improve current homes and buildings to waste less energy, protect us from climate extremes, and run on clean energy. We must prioritize helping those most harmed by climate extremes and fossil fuels vulnerable

communities like mine.

Oregon needs a lot more affordable housing, and other buildings like schools and hospitals, for our growing population. These should all be built smart from the start, healthier and more resilient against growing climate harms. Our first step should be to stop making the problem worse. It's more affordable to build all-electric with heat pumps, and more affordable to live and work in homes and buildings that waste less energy. Heat pumps will keep us cozy in winter with up to 3 times lower bills than other heating sources, and cool us in the summer too. Gas is more expensive than we can afford and the costs are skyrocketing. NW Natural Gas— the largest fossil fuel company in Oregon— increased rates more than 40% in 13 months. Meanwhile, the cost of renewable electricity, like solar and wind, keeps falling.

I support SB 868, 869, 870, and 871 because, as a fire affected victim this means my kids and their kids will have a better chance than my mom got to have a dignified and safe life in the state of Oregon.