

Submitter: Rene Braga

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB868

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

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 ever got to have a dignified and safer life in the state of Oregon.

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 our homes were made out of paper, more Resilient, Efficient Buildings, mean safer communities, lower costs, less pollution, and a more livable future for 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. Like I'm doing right now.

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 that we know are a certain future. 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. We cannot keep trying to fix this issue with the same approach, that is why I support resilient buildings as a dynamic solution.