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Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

Testimony in favor of SB 868, 869, 870, and 871

Submitted by Laura Tabor, Climate Action Director

Members of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the resilient buildings package, SB 868-871.

The Nature Conservancy in Oregon (TNC) is a science-based, non-partisan organization that works in communities around the state, manages lands and waters in varied ecosystems, and partners with tribes, ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber, and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature. Addressing the climate change crisis is a core component of TNC's work to create a world where people and nature can thrive, and we recognize the importance of the building sector in reducing the state's greenhouse gas emissions, enabling a broader clean energy transition, and providing resilient spaces for Oregonians to live and work.

Buildings are one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon, and experts anticipate we need to reduce energy waste by 40% nationally to decarbonize our economy. Making buildings more efficient not only reduces their carbon footprint, it also makes the spaces we live in more resilient and comfortable in extreme weather.

To realize these outcomes, we need to build new buildings as efficiently as possible and add tools to reduce emissions from existing buildings, including using electricity for much more of our space and water heating. SB 869 – Build Smart from the Start will increase the efficiency of new buildings through updates to Oregon's base building codes, and SB 868 – Healthy Heating and Cooling for all and SB 870 – Building Performance Standards will spur increased efficiency in both the residential and commercial sector. Finally, SB 871 – Smart State Buildings will help state government lead by example by removing barriers to use of common efficiency financing tools for state building upgrades.

Oregon has long been a leader in energy efficiency. Utility and state agency-funded programs have served customers and residents for decades, significantly reducing energy demand and supporting contractor networks and training. These bills also present an opportunity to build on this capacity and grow Oregon's energy workforce.

We strongly urge your support of SB 868-871 and moving these bills forward.