



Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

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February 14, 2024

To: Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: [Sarah Wochele](#), Policy Associate, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)

Re: Support for SB 1530 -3 Amendment; Healthy Homes Grant Program

The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB) is a statewide, membership-based 501(c)3 nonprofit consumer advocacy developed by citizens' initiative in 1984. CUB represents the interests of Oregon households by advocating for utility regulations and policies that protect your wallet. To date, we have saved Oregonians almost \$10 billion. CUB asks for your support of SB 1530 with the -3 amendment, particularly the Healthy Homes Repair Fund and the Residential Heat Pump Fund.

Weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades to a home can be the difference between energy affordability and energy burden. Even with low-income discount programs, which help ameliorate unaffordable energy bills, the root of the problem remains unaddressed without energy efficiency upgrades. Discounting unaffordable bills on its own does not address a family's drafty home or inefficient appliances, and therefore does not address the wasted energy. Energy inefficient homes are not only a serious barrier to achieving energy affordability for low-income households, but such infrastructure contributes to keeping Oregon from meeting our climate and energy goals. The often dual nature of energy inefficiency and energy unaffordability are problems that to various degrees have effects on all Oregonians. At a micro level, when we can ensure that low-income Oregonians have their energy needs met, at a macro level, all Oregonians are better off.

While energy efficiency upgrades appear to be a common sense path toward energy affordability, accessibility to these necessary upgrades remains a barrier for low-income families and renters. The up-front cost of energy upgrades like heat pumps and weatherization are investments that households who are struggling to pay their energy bills simply cannot afford. The Healthy Homes Grant Program is an intersectional program that checks many boxes, including energy efficiency, energy affordability, and acknowledgement of the need to meet Oregon's climate and energy goals, while not leaving any Oregonians behind in the process. This investment in the Healthy Homes Grant Program pays all Oregonians back in the environmental and energy benefits it will reap. Finally, we are appreciative and grateful that Healthy Homes was included in the budget at \$7.5 million. This program is crucial and we feel it should be funded to the full \$15 million.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Wochele, Policy Associate