



March 18, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for SB 54

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

I write to you on behalf of Home Forward in support of the adoption of cooling standards as contemplated in SB 54.

Home Forward is the Public Housing Authority (PHA) for Multnomah County and the largest provider of affordable housing in the state of Oregon. We serve approximately 18,000 low-income households by providing affordable housing, administering rent assistance, and providing supportive services. We own over 7,200 affordable homes throughout Multnomah County and provide households with services which range from housing stability supports to health and wellness. Meanwhile, we fund rent assistance for over 12,000 households each month. Home Forward's mission is to create a better community by providing housing stability through affordable housing development, housing choice expansion, services that support quality of life, and advocacy to improve local and national housing systems.

Home Forward recognizes the urgent need of regulations that ensure that all residents, particularly those in low-income and historically marginalized communities, have access to safe and habitable living conditions. With the increasing frequency of extreme heat events due to climate change, the necessity for cooling solutions in residential housing has never been more critical. Cooling should not be a privilege but a right, particularly for vulnerable populations such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families living in affordable housing.

For the past four years, Home Forward has installed cooling solutions across thousands of homes in our portfolio. We have experienced the gratitude of residents; some with young children, others navigating mental health challenges or disabilities, all of whom experience the intersectionality of low-income to no-income situations. Despite their different backgrounds, one common thread unites them all, the fundamental satisfaction of being comfortable in their own homes, in their own privacy, without having to seek temporary relief elsewhere.

In the city of Portland, the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) has been instrumental in providing funding opportunities for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate resiliency initiatives.

Programs like these enable the transition to sustainable, climate-resilient housing by funding improvements such as energy-efficient cooling systems and other heat mitigation efforts. However, while PCEF provides a crucial funding stream within city limits, there remains a significant gap for communities outside of city of Portland, areas that are equally affected by extreme heat but lack dedicated resources. To address this disparity, we urge you to couple the adoption of any cooling requirements with funding opportunities to support cooling and sustainability programs.

Investing in cooling infrastructure and climate-resilient housing is not only a matter of public health and safety but also an essential step toward climate equity. We strongly support initiatives that recognize this need and call for additional funding streams to ensure no community is left behind in the fight against climate-driven heat impacts.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer support. Please contact me at (503) 280-3708 or carolina.gomez@homeforward.org or regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolina Gomez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carolina Gomez
Director of Integrated Facilities, Sustainability and Safety