



League of Women Voters of Portland

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Date: February 7, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Senator Kate Lieber, chair

From: Debbie Kaye, president

Re: SB 1518 – Support (Local Option to Adopt Reach Code)

Our entire state benefits when our cities reduce greenhouse gas emissions **at the source**. SB 1518 empowers cities to do this by requiring more energy-efficient construction within their boundaries. The League of Women Voters of Portland supports SB 1518 and urges the committee to do so.

Two-thirds of Oregonians live in cities.ⁱ More than half of Oregon’s electricity is delivered by investor-owned utilities to businesses and residences in cities.ⁱⁱ Cities bear a major responsibility for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and therefore, a major responsibility for reducing them. When cities offer to step up, the League believes the state legislature should accept their offer and let them.

The League of Women Voters arrives at its advocacy positions after careful research. It has concluded that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and planet. The League also believes that significant reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions can be achieved through improving the energy efficiency of buildings.ⁱⁱⁱ Our building codes, which have successfully protected the public in so many situations, can become an inadvertent barrier to improved health and safety in these times. Fortunately, SB 1518 provides a well-considered and well-designed way to move forward carefully.

Faced with the magnitude of global warming, it is easy to become paralyzed, concluding that nothing we do matters. Oregon’s recent history suggests that this might not be the case.

In the last 30 years, the City of Portland has reduced per capita emissions by 42 percent while growing rapidly. However, total emissions are what count, and the city acknowledges that “bolder, new actions and investments to drastically reduce emissions” are required to meet the city’s goals.^{iv} Action Item 2A of the City of Portland/Multnomah County Climate Action Plan has for many years called for revisions to the Oregon building codes that target net-zero energy by

2030.^v SB 1518 is a small step in the right direction. Because it relies on more energy efficient buildings, it avoids the “dirty power” problem raised in the Building Owners and Managers of Oregon comment to this committee dated February 7, 2020.

Thank you for this opportunity to support SB 1518.

Sincerely,



Debbie Kaye, president
League of Women Voters of Portland

ⁱ <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-of-rural-health/about-rural-and-frontier-data>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.oregon.gov/puc/forms/Forms%20and%20Reports/2020-Oregon-Utility-Statistics-Book.pdf> - report page 10.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://my.lwv.org/lwvus/position/climate-change>

^{iv} <https://www.portland.gov/bps/climate-action/2018-carbon-emissions-and-trends>

^v https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2019-07/cap-2015_june30-2015_web_0.pdf