



Testimony before the Oregon State Plumbing Board

By Steve Houston, American Heating / Board Member, ORPHCC

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In support of a state-wide plumbing code

Chair Gray and members of the Board, my name is Steve Houston and I work for American Heating in their Plumbing Division. I also serve as a member of the Board of Directors for the Oregon State Association of Plumbing Heating and Cooling Contractors.

Oregon PHCC represents contractors who are both open and closed shops. We represent commercial, industrial and residential contractors. And, we represent businesses in new construction, in remodels, in repair and in the service industry including emergency service.

My testimony this morning, during this public comment period, is fairly simple. Plumbers need a single, state-wide code in order to effectively do our work. And the work of plumbers is vital to the health, safety and welfare of all citizens.

Consider, for a moment, the responsibilities we have. As plumbers, we are ultimately responsible for ensuring clean water moves from the utility to the point of use without contamination. We have to get it right every time or the results can literally be life-threatening. We serve homes and hospitals. We serve restaurants and schools. We are always cognizant of the impact our work has on our communities and the environment. People assume, without even thinking, that their water will always be clean and available. We take that charge seriously.

Moreover, we also bear the responsibility of ensuring waste water moves down the line from the drain to the sewer without contaminating the building, the soil or the groundwater on the other side of the pipes.

In order to do our work right every time, we must rely on a set of standards which clearly establish the minimum best practices standards. This single standard, the state-wide Plumbing Code, ensures everyone in Oregon has safe drinking water and a wastewater system that is safe and healthy for people and the environment.

We accept that the standards in the Plumbing Code will change from time to time. There will be recommendations we support and recommendations we oppose. But in every case, no matter what, you will find that the plumbing industry -- from the large, multi-state contractors to the one-man shop -- will always support the sanctity of a single, state-wide Plumbing Code for everyone to use.

Finally, we believe everyone must acknowledge the limitations of the Plumbing Code. The Code sets standards for installation, not for use and ongoing maintenance. When a plumber installs the right equipment and the installation is approved by a Plumbing Inspector, then the installing plumbers responsibilities and liabilities should end, beyond those of basic warranty of materials and labor. Maintaining the system is the responsibility of the owner.

We encourage this Board to remain steadfast in its support of the state-wide Plumbing Code. Thank you.

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