

Testimony in Favor of SB 324  
Rural Communities and Economic Development  
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Senator Roblan and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify before the Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development Committee today.

My name is Louise Groomer; I am the Business Administrator for Chiloquin Volunteer Ambulance Service and an Oregon EMT-Intermediate. I am also on the Board of Directors of the Oregon Rural Health Association as a Member At Large from the EMS community.

I am sorry I could not make it to Salem to testify in person but I am needed here in Chiloquin to cover the ambulance response area.

When SB 31 was passed in 2005, I was an EMT-Basic and took advantage of this credit thinking what a great gesture this was for the volunteer. I am no longer eligible for the tax credit due to a change in my job description but I am still a strong believer and advocate of it.

When we have new volunteers come to our agency, informing them about the tax credit is high on the list of unforeseen benefits of volunteering as an EMS provider. Believe me when I tell you, at times it feels like the "costs" greatly outweigh the "benefits". To become an EMR takes about 50 hours of education. To become an EMT takes about six months, going to classes 2 evenings a week and every other Saturday. Then to keep the license, you need to attend continuing education. To become an Advanced EMT or Oregon EMT-Intermediate, the whole process repeats itself. All of this takes precious time away from family and other obligations. Our agency is able to afford to help pay the cost of the education of the EMT's, most rural agencies cannot afford this expense, leaving the \$1,300.00 for school, books, and testing fees up to the volunteer.

Our agency currently has 10 volunteers eligible for the tax credit. The Oregon Rural Volunteer EMS Provider Tax Credit is very important to these volunteers. We recently started giving our volunteers a small stipend when they cover shifts and the first question from them was "How is this money going to impact my Tax Credit?" Fortunately, the small amount we are able to give our volunteers will not change their eligibility for the tax credit. Had that not been the case, many of the responders were willing to not receive the stipend in order to still qualify for the tax credit.

The small acknowledgement and thanks in the form of this tax credit from the State of Oregon for these volunteers means a lot. Of the 316 transport we did in 2012, 206 were staffed by volunteers eligible for the tax credit. These same people attended approximately 30 hours each of continuing education to maintain their license.

I hope this committee will do everything in its power to move SB 324 forward.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify before your committee.

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