



February 20, 2019

SB 204 – Rural Volunteer EMT Tax Credit

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee,

I am not sure most Oregonians are aware that once they venture beyond the Willamette Valley, they are dependent in great measure upon volunteers to respond if an emergency should occur. The more rural the area, the more dependent upon volunteers the local emergency response agency is. Most volunteer EMS personnel must pay out of their pockets for their initial training, their continuing education, and other required expenses. They must take time away from their jobs and families in order to maintain an emergency response 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Oregon Office of Rural Health repeatedly hears from rural EMS organizations that it is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain volunteers. The Oregon Volunteer Rural EMS Provider Tax Credit was created in 2007 to help defray the out of pocket costs of rural volunteer EMTs. Of the time a person provides emergency medical services, at least 20% must be spent volunteering those services in a qualifying rural area. For the purposes of this tax credit, a qualifying rural area is located at least 25 miles from a community of 30,000 or more.

This is a very small incentive for those who sacrifice so much for our health and safety in an emergency. In 2017, the last year we have complete data, nearly 500 volunteers received this credit. The fiscal impact of this program is currently about \$200,000 per biennium.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on such an important matter. I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Duehmig
Deputy Director, ORH

