



March 7, 2019

Paul Evans, Chair  
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness  
900 Court St, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Evans, Members of the Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

As the members of the Linn County Fire Defense Board (LCFDB), we represent the departments and fire districts of Albany, Brownsville, Halsey-Shedd, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Scio, Sweet Home, and Tangent, and it is with grave concern that we are compelled to write to you.

Thousands of calls are placed each day to 9-1-1 in Oregon. Citizens have an expectation that their calls will be answered quickly and they will be helped. They expect well trained and capable personnel answering their calls as well as the critical infrastructure to deliver their emergency calls in a fast, efficient manner. The cost of operating a consolidated communication center continues to rise based on fixed operational costs and personnel costs. We have also seen a tremendous change in technology requirements over the past 20 years, yet we have not had a significant change in revenue needed to fund dispatch centers from the 9-1-1 tax nor has there been adequate savings set aside to update our critical, lifesaving infrastructure.

The 9-1-1 tax in Oregon has not kept up with inflation and has remained at .75 cents since 1995. HB2449 seeks to increase the tax and helps to ensure continued safe operations of our 9-1-1 network in the State of Oregon.

As fire chiefs of the LCFDB, we request your support of HB2449 to increase the 9-1-1 tax to \$1.50. We would respectfully ask for your consideration to remove from HB2449 the provisions that gives 2% to counties with a population less than 40,000; reduce the amount for Oregon Emergency Management 9-1-1 Program from 4% to 2%; and reduce the amount for the Department of Revenue from 1% to .05%. We would also ask your consideration to add language that would specifically allow interest earned on the 9-1-1 tax to be held in an account to be used for future upgrades. The tax does not have sufficient funds to pay for current needs and certainly does not have enough funds to plan for needed upgrades. We are hopeful you will consider adding specific language to at least begin the saving that will be needed for our future 9-1-1 needs as it relates to technology and infrastructure buildout and security.

HB2449 will help ensure a more sustainable model for our emergency communications needs throughout the State of Oregon. We are already beginning to see a shift from the 9-1-1 tax to the local level and need some immediate assistance, which this increase in the tax would help support. It is important to know that this increase in the tax will not provide 100% funding to all of our 9-1-1 centers in Oregon, but it will certainly help improve our ability to respond to our communities when they experience the worst days of their lives and need to call for help.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John R. Bradner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John R. Bradner  
Fire Chief, Albany Fire Department  
Chair, Linn County Fire Defense Board