



March 12, 2019

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

The Confederation of Oregon School Administrators believes in ensuring students are safe at school. We are supportive of the current emergency preparedness framework used by schools. However, we do have some concerns with House Bill 2229 as it is written.

First, we are concerned that schools do not have the resources to properly implement this bill. The bill has a blank General Fund allocation, but that allocation is only to be spent on developing and distributing curriculum by the Oregon Department of Education, not by districts implementing these new mandates. Training teachers and other school staff on implementing new curriculum and drills will take time and resources.

We are also concerned about how to fit the mandated instruction required in this bill into our school year. For full implementation of this bill, districts would now need to teach emergency procedures for natural disasters, including flooding and heavy snow. And districts will also be required to offer a whole new set of instruction and drills related not just to emergency procedures for fires, earthquakes, safety threats, and natural disasters, but for both *preparation* for natural disasters and *survival* for weeks after a natural disaster.

This is a significant increase in the scope of safety instruction and drills for school districts. It will require more training time for teachers and staff, and more time spent on drills for students. Our schools are already under significant pressure to increase instructional time on academic subjects. Because of inadequate funding, many of our districts will have to figure out how to squeeze these new mandated trainings into an already overcrowded school calendar.

Our members believe that the best way to ensure that students are prepared to survive a natural disaster is to ensure that *every school building* in Oregon is prepared to survive a natural disaster. Unfortunately, too many schools across the states aren't seismically safe.

The Legislature has invested \$300 million in the Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program over the last two bienniums. Dozens of school buildings have been updated or are in the process of being updated. However, there is an urgent need for additional funding. For example, the current round of grants has \$75 million available to schools and community colleges. There are almost \$170 million worth of applications for the available funds.

We believe the best use of limited resources for student safety in the event of a natural disaster is to increase investments to make buildings structurally safe and urge the Legislature to focus their efforts in this area.

We are happy to work with the proponents of the bill on possible alternatives to the current language and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by: Morgan Allen, COSA