



OREGON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION



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SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2565 April 2, 2019

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Introduction

Members of the House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Chair Evans, this written testimony is on behalf of the Oregon Emergency Management Association (OEMA) in support of House Bill 2565.

Background

Across the nation a growing list of profound, record setting disasters have had a major effect on communities over recent years. In Oregon we are exposed to dangers from wild land fire, drought, flooding, technological/infrastructure crisis (water), and the immanent threat of the Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake. In the face of all these threats and hazards, there is a growing and well-documented understanding that Oregon would be unable to overcome the challenges of a landscape-wide disaster. Following a major exercise in 2016, state and local government officials learned that Oregon was profoundly unprepared to support our citizens for two weeks before Federal assistance is expected to arrive.

Supporting Data

In January of 2019, the Oregon Secretary of State released an audit of emergency management capabilities at the state and local level, and defined gaps in preparedness. According to that audit entitled *The State Must Do More to Prepare Oregon for a Catastrophic Disaster*, emergency management offices at all levels lack the resources necessary to properly influence policy and to develop programs to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience. Moreover, Governor Brown's recent paper authored by State Resilience Officer, Mike Harryman, *Resiliency 2025*, implores Oregon's government to be more prepared for the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. The fifth goal of that paper is to *strengthen local emergency management organizations and develop more robust logistical staging bases, local supply chains, and more earthquake and mass displacement insurance options*. The passing of House Bill 2565 will be an important step toward preparing Oregon for catastrophic disaster and strengthening local emergency management organizations.

Reasoning

The title of the Secretary of State's paper could not be more clear; the state must do more to reinforce Oregon's resiliency. According to ORS 401.305(2), each county must have an emergency management agency; however, this has evolved into a glaringly unfunded mandate. The disparity of resources between metro and rural emergency management offices is vast. This is due in part to the inequity of distribution of federal grant funds such as the State Homeland Security Program grant and the Emergency Management Performance Grant fund. Moreover, the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization's exclusive access to Urban Areas Security Initiative funds leaves too many county and local emergency management offices under-funded and unable to meet their mission. This is why OEMA urges the legislature to pass House Bill 2565 so that every county emergency management office in Oregon is better equipped to execute the five mission areas of emergency

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management: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Passing of House Bill 2565 will not quell all of the funding shortfalls facing county emergency management agencies, but it will allow for expansion of personnel and community outreach that will save lives and limit property damage in response and recovery operations. The job of an emergency manager is to prepare their community and government for any sort of man-made or natural calamity. Emergency managers seek to understand the threats and hazards our community face, explore impacts, and to develop policies and programs to reduce vulnerability over time. Needless to say, that is an enormous responsibility that requires enormous resources. The Passing of House Bill 2565 is a necessary step toward a safer, more prepared Oregon.

Conclusion

In conclusion, OEMA urges the legislature to reinforce our states resiliency by passing House Bill 2565. The additional \$100,000 per year for each county emergency management agency will provide a solid substrate upon which emergency managers can expand their personnel, and therefor enhance their program into a more robust and prepared platform. The safety and continuity of Oregon's government and its' citizens are counting on it. Thank you very much for your consideration.