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DATE: April 3, 2019
TO: House Committee on Energy and Environment
RE: HB 3408, relating to state financial administration

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for scheduling a hearing and work session on HB 3408. We further appreciate the sponsors of this measure and their advocacy on behalf of an issue that is of high importance to rural Oregon.

Lane County is in support of HB 3408, which would appropriate \$500,000 to the Department of Environmental Quality and be dedicated to uses allowed by Oregon's Solid Fuel Heating and Air Quality Improvement Fund. During the 2017 session of the Oregon Legislature Lane County advocated for beneficial changes to the allowable uses of this fund, and further worked to ensure that the DEQ budget included funding to implement several of the recommendations of Oregon's Woodsmoke Task Force, something the 2015 Oregon Legislature created.

HB 3408 will allow this nascent work to continue to evolve. While we have testified on the issue of woodsmoke to several Committees of the Oregon Legislature, there are a number of points that bear repeating in defense of why this funding is of such high importance:

- The City of Oakridge, located in Lane County, has for years been working to improve its air quality, particularly due to a federal finding of "non-attainment" with respect to US Environmental Protection Agency regulations for the allowable concentrations of small smoke particles known as "PM 2.5". Through a lot of collaboration and concerted effort, Oakridge has managed to climb out of non-attainment status and is now in what is termed "maintenance". While this is great news, Oakridge is a city that is still at risk due to both its topography and socio-economic demography. It is a small city surrounded by steep, forested hills and many of its residents rely on firewood for heating. Woodstove upgrades are expensive and often challenging, particularly for low income residents. Notably, the way the federal regulations work, if a city is deemed non-attainment, the entire county is painted with that same brush. This is the reason you see both Lane and Washington Counties so interested in this issue. Our ability to continue to attract businesses and make investments in infrastructure can become all the more challenging when these EPA regulations cover the entirety of the County.
- While woodsmoke impacts can be mitigated by the replacement of older heating technology with new, there are other programs that several of the focused communities involved with the task force developed. For example, funding from the 2017-19 appropriation was utilized within the City of Oakridge to further develop a community firewood program. The goal of the program is to ensure there exists a community wide supply of sufficiently seasoned firewood, as it is proven to burn cleaner than wet, or green wood. This program has additional benefits. For example, it is creating new

employment in a community that desperately needs jobs, and involves the removal of firewood from the National Forest lands surrounding Oakridge. This program has the added benefit of serving to prevent fuel loading on those lands. This is highly important in that community and indeed for all of Oregon as smoke from wildfires can easily travel hundreds of miles.

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