

To: Senate General Government and Emergency Preparedness:

Subject: Support for SB 1537

I would like to express my support for continued funding enabling the buildout and implementation of ShakeAlert technology in Oregon. An important provision of Senate Bill 1537 is to provide funds to complete the installation of seismographs needed to achieve desired instrument density for accurate determination of earthquake location and size – a critical part of the ShakeAlert early warning technology.

I have taught geology at Southern Oregon University for over twenty years and have followed the accumulation of data on the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ). I am very concerned about the current estimates of a one chance in three of a Magnitude 8 or 9 CSZ event in the next 50 years.

Oregon is very close to having the ability to institute a functioning earthquake early warning system that will allow us to mitigate the devastation and carnage of a major seismic event. Unfortunately, the Oregon Legislature dropped the requested funding at the end of the 2019 session. Passage of Senate Bill 1537 would restore funds for seismograph installation as well as support such other critical needs as enhanced public education of the “Two Weeks Ready” campaign, resources for dam safety inspections and updating Oregon’s Resilience Plan.

ShakeAlert is a critical part of our earthquake preparation and regional resilience. I have become absolutely convinced of the value and efficacy of ShakeAlert. Thanks to the facilitating efforts of the Rogue Valley Council of Governments, dozens of local agencies in SW Oregon have become willing and enthusiastic participants in the program’s early implementation process. I am a geologic resource to this collaboration.

Southern Oregon is the most isolated of the State’s major population centers. The region is highly I-5 dependent, without any significant major alternative transportation routes, and far from any other urban areas in Oregon or northern California. Being able to rely on ShakeAlert’s early warning capability and the other provision within SB 1537 will help us become a resource and not a burden after a major earthquake affecting southern Oregon.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for SB 1537. Please let us know if you need anything further from me in support of this bill to fund the provisions of SB 1537.

Sincerely,

Eric Dittmer
Professor Emeritus Southern Oregon University Geology and Environmental Studies