

Paul L Evans
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 20



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 2, 2021

Oregon House of Representatives
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Ref: HB 2927 as a solution to challenges identified "State of Oregon After-Action Review Enterprise Response to COVID-19."

Dear Colleagues:

The House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management (formerly Veterans and Emergency Preparedness) has focused much of our energy over the past three Legislative Sessions on drafting, improving, and passing out of committee a thoughtful approach to statewide structural and systemic reform for our emergency management functions. This letter is offered as additional support for the passage of HB 2927 (formerly LC 0268): support from conclusions drawn from a third-party objective evaluation of our enterprise response over the past year conducted by EM Partners (a well-known, respected Emergency Management consulting firm). Thank you in advance for reviewing this document and your consideration of HB 2927.

The "State of Oregon After-Action Review Enterprise Response to COVID-19" was put into final form and published in November 2020. It was presented to our committee during the December "Legislative Days" by State Resilience Officer Mike Harryman (additional materials from this presentation available upon request). The evaluation made the following eleven (11) conclusions:

- A. Expand awareness and training on the state's emergency programs to build a broader understanding of the dynamics involved in emergency response and recovery.
- B. Continue statewide training, including internal agency training, multi-agency training, ESF (Emergency Support Function) partner agency training, ECC (Emergency Coordination Center) training, GDC (Governor's Disaster Cabinet) agency training, and full system training involving local, state, tribal, and federal partners.
- C. Plans need to be critically reviewed and updated with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color), vulnerable populations, and access and functional needs populations centered in the response.

- D. Update the HIPPO to reflect the connection to the enterprise-wide response system.
- E. Train and exercise ESF 8 personnel (FEMA designation for Public Health and Medical Services) based on the plan and then orient state, tribal, and local partners to OHA's preparedness structures and response posture, as reflected in the plan.
- F. Evaluate the organizational structures outlined in the Basic Plan of the Emergency Operations Plan to determine if the linkage of the Governor's Office and the Governor's Disaster Cabinet to the incident response structure is clear and specific. Agency-specific support plans need to reflect the linkage to the larger enterprise plans and the role agency leaders play in emergency operations. The suspension of normal day-to-day systems during emergency operations needs to be clear.
- G. Agency administrators should consider a critical review of their agency COOP (Continuity of Operations Plan) plan to determine if existing planning is adequate to guide agency operations in a future event.
- H. Work on further integration between ESFs and ICS and set a clear understanding of who is leading. Have all agencies integrate ICS training into staff development broadly, inclusive of leadership.
- I. Consider OEM's place within the Military Department and whether it is time to adjust OEM's placement in the state organizational structure to provide more visibility and alignment with partner response agencies. This evaluation should include converting the ECC from a coordination center to a full Emergency Operations Center. Create connections with local businesses that could fulfill needed communication requests and develop a communication method to place orders for those supplies from around the state—more top-down information sharing and clarity of information.
- J. More coordinated, strategic, operational communication with local, state, tribal, and federal partners is critical to a successful response. Establish mechanisms and technology tools that support bi-directional communication from incident leadership to operational staff and vice versa.
- K. An inventory management strategy needs to be established with clear roles and responsibilities for proper storage of supplies, expiration tracking, and stock rotation and replenishing.

House Bill 2927 is the result of a three-year workgroup process. Every possible stakeholder interest was invited to participate. All/any stakeholder groups claiming potentially claiming a lack of opportunity must own their choices to remain unengaged. As drafted, the bill resolves most and improves all of the challenges identified in the summary. House Bill 2927 accomplishes the following:

1. Establishes the Oregon State Fire Marshal as an independent agency. This simplifies command and control, supporting the pivot towards expanding scale and scope outlined in the Governor's Council on Wildfire Response.
2. Establishes the Office of Emergency Management into an independent agency. The new agency would have a specific advisory council for local, county, tribal, and stakeholder input, strengthening mission-critical partnerships.
3. Transforms the existing Oregon Homeland Security Council into a commission empowered to coordinate agency operations; establishes an equal in standing Emergency Preparedness Advisory Council comprised of representatives from ESFs, non-profit/private/public stakeholders, and other interests as required for long-term resiliency planning and preparedness.
4. Transitions Departments of Emergency Management, Military Department, State Fire Marshal, and State Police into Governor-appointed, Senate-confirmed positions for consistency.
5. Outlines areas for targeted investment of equipment, personnel, training, and resources through Emergency Management, enabling capacity to improve all the report's identified conclusions.

House Bill 2927 is about the structure and system necessary for fielding improved response capabilities and sustainable recovery capacities. To answer all the challenges identified, the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management has also drafted a support package. These bills build upon the underlying foundation of House Bill 2927. This package includes House Bills: 2426 (SPIRE II Grant for the deployment of mission critical response equipment), 2461 (Oregon Homeland Security Council facilitated all-hazards stockpile and materials strategy), 2883 ("Open Spaces" facilities/stockpile placement development strategy), 2896 (mandatory statewide all-hazards exercises), 2897 (mandatory ICS training for senior leaders), and 2898 (a \$9.00 surtax on income dedicated for resiliency equipment/projects).

In conclusion, I ask for your support as we navigate House Bill 2927 and the support package through the legislative process. Though we have been pushing for these changes for a while, we believe the report provided makes the case even stronger than we have previously been able to. Together, we can significantly improve our statewide posture for responding to a crisis, rebuilding afterward, and keeping faith with our people and place. Please consider this bipartisan-led, years-in-the-making, rational, reasonable, and responsible course of action.

Respectfully,

