

From: [Robin Benatti](#)
To: [HWREC Exhibits](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on the Alameda Fire.
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Hello, my name is Robin Benatti and I moved to the Rogue Valley 5 years ago. My apartment complex on Suncrest Road in Talent was filled with trees, birds and well loved feline and canine neighbors.

On Sept 8, 2020, I went into Medford to shop and have my hair done. On my way home I got a text message from a friend that the Suncrest Road area was being evacuated. it was the only notice I had that the small brush fire had moved into Talent.

I rushed back via the back roads to get to my apartment, but all ways into the area were blocked off. The fire moved quickly and I drove for two hours snaking through the streets of Phoenix and Talent trying to return to my complex. Having all but given up hope of returning, I sped along Hwy 99 surrounded by grass fires and was finally able to turn onto Suncrest and retrieve my cat Luna. The thought of losing another companion (I had lost my Kenji the month before) was too much to bear and propelled me back to my apartment, no matter what.

Once I retrieved Luna, we remained stranded for 4 hours on Hwy 99 with spontaneous wildfires igniting in every direction. Being directed back and forth on the same quarter mile of road, I was convinced that I was not going to survive. Eventually I was police escorted out of the area and into South Medford.

The next morning, via a video from a brave individual driving through the wreckage who posted on Facebook and YouTube. I saw that my home had burned to the ground. This was the only way during that first week that I knew whether I had a home to go to or not.

I credit the first responders for doing everything they could during a horrendous situation. There was no warning, no alarm, no communication from any centralized organization.

It was obvious, and still is, that the Talent/Phoenix community is on their own. If not for the neighbors who gave everything they could, and then some, those who became homeless would never have survived.

The fire centers became mutual aid centers, a place to express our trauma and to have our bodies and souls nourished. Five months later, I still visit the Fire Relief Center in Phoenix for food and fellowship several times a week. It's a place where I know people will understand me and not expect me to be "back to normal".

I feel like the state has pretty much left us to fend for ourselves. Aid came, but way way later than when we so desperately needed it.

The truth of the matter is that we took care, and continue to take care of ourselves as a community.

I would like the state to continue to fund the grassroots agencies that have, since September 9th, been taking care of the community. They will know where the funds need to go and where to distribute.

Also please keep Rogue Food Unites funded for as long as possible. It helps everyone in the community with nourishment and love.

Thank you for taking the time to review my testimony.

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Robin Benatti
robinbenatti1@gmail.com
541-816-5719 (home)