



American Planning Association
Oregon Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

March 16, 2021

Senator Jeff Golden, Chair
Senator Dallas Heard, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony from the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association in Support of SB 287

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Heard, and Members of the Committee:

This letter provides testimony from the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) in support of SB 287. OAPA is an independent, statewide, not-for-profit educational organization of more than 800 planners from across the state who work for cities, counties, special districts, state agencies, tribes, community-based organizations, universities, and private firms. We provide leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in community planning, promoting education and resident empowerment, and providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change. OAPA supports sustainable communities and works to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by helping to create and stabilize places that are equitable, healthy, and resilient and provide ongoing economic, environmental, and social benefits.

OAPA supports SB 287 for its robust and comprehensive approach to addressing and minimizing wildfire risk. SB 287 aligns with the Chapter's 2021 Legislative Priorities to: "Promote resiliency and recovery" and "Advance racial equity."

OAPA strongly supports review and recommendation of possible means for using the statewide land use planning program, local zoning and development ordinances, and building codes to minimize wildfire risk, as proposed in section 14 of the bill. That work is proposed to be conducted by the State Forestry Department, in collaboration with the Department of Land Conservation and Development and the Land Use and Wildfire Policy Advisory Committee and reported back to an interim committee of the Legislative Assembly.

More specifically, OAPA appreciates implementation strategies with agency coordination and partnerships, particularly where funding has been identified for proposed mandates, such as recommended through the Wildfire Defensible Space Fund (section 10) for the purpose of carrying out the local government financial assistance program described in section 9. Additionally, provisions for Counties to coordinate with the Fire Marshall for defensible space enforcement are key as code compliance officers are often fully overloaded with nuisance cases, having no time for following up on defensible space requirements.

Additionally, OAPA strongly supports section (9)(6) which requires financial assistance provided by the State Fire Marshal "...to give priority to the creation of defensible space on lands owned by



communities of color, indigenous communities, persons with limited proficiency in English and persons of lower income as defined in ORS 456.055.”

Resilience of the built environment to wildfires could be strengthened by mandating wildfire building codes and clarifying their applicability. Allowing issuers of property insurance policies to adopt coverage provisions and underwriting standards to encourage property protection approaches, as outlined in Section 7, is a good step. However, if building codes that harden structures against wildfire damage were more widely required, economies of scale could help bring the price of wildfire resistant materials down.

Thank you for your time and attention to our testimony. OAPA recommends that the Committee vote the bill out with a Do Pass recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Ray', is positioned above the name and title of the signatory.

Aaron Ray, AICP, President
Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eunice Kim', is positioned above the name and title of the signatory.

Eunice Kim, AICP, Chair
Legislative and Policy Affairs Committee