

Chair Golden and Committee members,

My name is Matthew Brady, I am from Azalea, Oregon. I am a non-industrial timberland owner and have been a full-time professional Wildland firefighter within Oregon's "Complete and Coordinated System" for 21 years. This past summer I was the first firefighter on scene and Incident Commander of one of the fires that combined to make the Archie Creek Fire, which burned into my hometown of Glide, Oregon, and over 131,000 acres.

I am concerned with Section 8 of SB726-1 and the apparent lack of regional input when making determinations for wildfire risk reduction throughout the State.

Risk from fire is generally determined by fire behavior. The three components that determine fire behavior are: topography, fuels, and weather. Topography is widely varied throughout the state, but generally constant for a given location. Fuels vary seasonally, and are influenced by the geography in which they are located. Weather fluctuates on a daily basis. We all know our state to have a diverse landscape, and diverse uses across that landscape.

From my reading of the International Wildland-Urban Interface code, there are only three categories of risk, with very simplistic and generic guidelines for Wildland fuel mitigation. This conflicts with the mapping criteria in Section 7(3), which enumerates a variety of risk influences. The diversity of our state stymies the simplistic approach to defensible space laid out in the IWUI code as far as Wildland fuels are concerned.

The Office of the State Fire Marshall has no practical influence on or contribution to the daily prevention, detection, or suppression of wildfires in Douglas County where I reside. It therefore seems folly to me to place OSFM in charge of establishing defensible space requirements without any regional and local input. Private citizens who own land within Wildland Urban Interface need to be a part of the process of determining requirements if they are to have any buy-in in them. The success of wildfire mitigation is dependent on private landowners committing to completing and maintaining any work that might occur. There are also many Forest Protective Associations, Range Protective Associations, and Oregon Department of Forestry Districts who are already doing good work in helping landowners establish appropriate defensible space for the fire environment in which they live. Their input should be a part of the process as well.

Section 8 of SB726-1 needs to be amended so it clearly states that there will be regional citizen involvement in the establishment of defensible space requirements and the creation of the comprehensive statewide map of wildfire risk.

On a final note: I have personally coordinated and overseen dozens of defensible space fuels reduction projects in my professional career. Many of these projects were located within the scar of the Archie Creek Fire. A majority of these projects within the fire scar lost structures irrespective of the fuels reduction done. Defensible Space Fuels reduction is an excellent thing to have but is not a guarantee that a house will survive a wildfire. Nor is not having it a guarantee of loss of property.