

Testimony in Regards to Senate Bill 863 from David V. Busby

27 April 2021

Senator Wagner, Senator Girod, and all members of the Rules Committee; I am writing today as a citizen who is very concerned about all Community members in the State of Oregon being able to respond to disasters such as wildfires and evacuate safely. I strongly advocate for approval of Senate Bill 863.

During my active duty assignments in San Diego California, my family and I were evacuated multiple times during wildfires. The chaos of that experience is one of the things that drove me into my current profession as an emergency manager of a mid-size community within this beautiful State.

Evacuation planning requires carefully thought out plans that outline responsibilities for response agencies such as Fire and law enforcement. It *must* also include collaboration with principal and partner agencies such as Rural Fire Protection Districts and local, state, and federal agencies in the local area. The next step is to conduct outreach with all community members to help them understand what local government will do, and what each of them must be ready to do as well.

This is where SB 863 can and would empower rural fire protection districts to fully engage in this process and will ultimately save lives. The proposed language change to ORS 478.260 will allow the districts to directly engage in creating or sustaining vital evacuation routes across the state. In my experience working this at the local level, there are multiple layers that community members must work through depending on where evacuation routes are located, how they have been maintained, or even if they still exist. This proposed legislative change will ensure that there is a reasonable body directly engaged in creating safe evacuation routes.

Please work to approve this important change to empower our rural fire protection districts!

I sincerely thank you for all you do, and for your consideration in this matter.

(s) David V. Busby

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