

I am a fire victim of the Almeda Fire in the Rogue Valley which destroyed 3000 structures in Jackson County, over half of which were manufactured homes. Jackson County sustained 3/5 of all 2020 wildfire losses in the State of Oregon.

I am testifying tonight on behalf of Zone Captains, a local non-profit helping fire victims with roughly 500 fire victims in our network, out of the 3000 households that lost homes & businesses.

I want to also speak on behalf of mobile homeowners, because many were low-income, seniors, or Spanish-speaking who owned homes before, but find themselves in poverty afterwards. Unlike renters who now have lateral opportunities and stick built homeowners who most often had insurance, the manufactured fire survivors now need financial & logistic help getting back into a position of ownership & equity.

WINS:

1. Forgivable Loan Program created by Rep. Pam Marsh~which has helped many fire victims in our network have an extra chunk of funds to be able to purchase a new manufactured home.
2. Spanish-speaking forums on housing grants supported by Pam Marsh
3. Zone Captains non-profit has 9 Zone Captains in various parts of the burn scar and 10 behind-the-scene employees advocating for fire victims through social support, free counseling sessions, and resource referrals.
4. DHS has been very helpful with obtaining emergency hotel housing for fire victims that are about to be unhoused.
5. ACCESS has been a rockstar agency with great resource delivery of rental assistance, housing grants such as the forgivable loan, and great communication, both directly with fire survivors, and between community based organizations.

CHALLENGES:

1. The high cost of manufactured and stick built materials, plus supply delays are leading to a very slow rebuild.

We need ready supplies & affordable prices for rebuilding manufactured homes. There are fire victims who may have access to the forgivable loan, but that plus their small insurance payout is just a drop in the bucket. Right after the fire new 2-3 bedroom manufactured homes were available for \$100,000. Now those same homes are 200,000, putting them out of reach of most seniors and low-income people, who had enjoyed 2-3 bedroom homes before the fire.

2. Residents of FEMA Parks continue to be confused about the purchase program, the rental program, and their options. For example, all FEMA park residents have a Disaster Case Manager, but many are not aware of this.

We need better communication between DCMs, FEMA, and FEMA park residents to help empower people to understand their options. Zone Captains are doing what we can in collaboration with Rogue Action Center, Rogue Climate, Unete, and Rep. Pam Marsh, to get the word out about important updates in the parks. But it would be great to have more communication directly from the agencies themselves.

3. Overall, fire survivors and their allies are feeling exhausted and worn out from the trauma of the fire, and then the subsequent trauma of living in temporary housing for a year and a half with no end in sight.

We need more mental health supports and structural recovery supports for fire victims and their allies. Even with the free counseling sessions through our Zone Captains network but even with that, fire survivors at our meetups express ongoing pain and suffering.

Thank you for your time. I truly hope we can all work together to help all 3000 fire victims in the Rogue Valley and all 5000 fire victims throughout the State have their happy ending.

Kathy Kali