



# OREGON TRAIL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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February 9, 2022

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative  
Testimony, House Bill 4097  
House Committee on Revenue

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Pham and Werner Reschke, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tucker Billman and I am the Manager of Government Affairs for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC). OTEC is a member-owned and governed electric cooperative that serves over 60,000 residents in Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties in Eastern Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 4097. Over the past few years, OTEC has developed strong partnerships with volunteer fire organizations across our service territory. In a world of increasing wildfire severity and devastation, volunteer fire organizations play a critical role in ensuring the safety of rural communities across Oregon. In much of our service territory, volunteer fire organizations serve as the front line of defense between our members and the devastation that often accompanies wildfires. For that reason, OTEC is continuously exploring ways we can serve as a resource to our local volunteer fire organizations to assist in increasing recruitment, expanding their apparatus and facilities, and accessing cutting edge technology to ensure the highest possible safety and success in their efforts to protect our members – hence why we are submitting this written testimony.

Over the past year, OTEC has utilized our monthly magazine publication *Ruralite* to encourage our members to join their local volunteer fire organizations. We are currently utilizing our GIS mapping technology to aid rural fire protection districts (RFPDs) in developing public-facing maps to inform the public about ever-changing fire conditions. We've worked with multiple rural fire protection districts to evaluate our distribution infrastructure to ensure our powerlines are not posing a safety risk to fire fighters and their apparatus. Finally, through USDA we've partnered with a local RFPD to purchase a new fire station that will serve as a significant upgrade for the district to elevate the defense of the community. We have dedicated strategic initiatives to these efforts, and our dedication to serving our volunteer fire organizations is a company-wide commitment.

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*Proudly serving Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties*

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OTEC has discussed HB 4097 with some of our local volunteer fire organization partners. Due to the feedback we received during those conversations, we believe the tax incentive created by this legislation could serve as a great tool to encourage membership in a volunteer fire organization, a desperate need for many of these organizations. OTEC offers our support for HB 4097 and encourages the committee to move this bill to the full House with a 'do pass' recommendation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 4097. The work volunteer fire organizations do is vital to rural communities across our State. This bill could go a long way to support their efforts. Do not hesitate to contact me at [tbillman@otec.coop](mailto:tbillman@otec.coop) or 541-519-3553.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JB', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Tucker Billman

Manager of Government Affairs

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative