

February 3, 2022

House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room H-178
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chairs Grayber & Members of the Committee:

The Special Districts Association of Oregon represents approximately 950 districts across the state that provide a wide range of services including, fire and rescue, municipal water, wastewater, irrigation, libraries as well as parks and recreation districts to name a few. We very much appreciate your efforts in making state and individual communities more prepared and resilient for future disasters and emergencies. However, our membership has expressed a few concerns with two provisions contained HB 4068 that is currently being considered your committee.

Our first concern can be found in Section 4 of the bill which states: **“All elected officials in this state.... shall complete introductory courses offered or approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency on incident command and the National Incident Management System.”** Our association acknowledges that this requirement makes sense for several our district members like fire, water, sewer, parks, and the like. However, we do not see the relevancy of this training for elected officials of certain types of special districts. For example, elected officials of cemetery maintenance districts, special road districts, road assessment districts, highway lighting districts, vector control districts, geothermal heating districts, heritage districts or sand control districts would gain much from this requirement because they have little if any emergency response, rescue, or recovery responsibilities.

The second area of concern is Section 6(4) that requires **“At least once per quarter, each county shall conduct a tabletop, scenario-based learning exercise related to emergency response. An exercise conducted by a county under this subsection must involve the majority of public or private safety agencies operating in the county.”** One of the concerns expressed is the requirement that a majority of public safety agencies in the county be involved in the quarterly table-top exercise. As you know, many of our fire service districts are primarily volunteer departments. We are concerned that the frequency of this requirement will put a strain on personnel and those districts with limited financial capacity. As you know, some of Oregon’s counties are geographically large and with limited financial capacities or due to constraints on personnel this provision could pose a real challenge in meeting the standard contained in this provision. Perhaps requiring this exercise to occur every six months would be a more reasonable standard.

We very much appreciate your efforts to ensure that Oregon and Oregonians are prepared for our next emergency our membership remains committed to being part of the state's response and recovery efforts during an emergency. However, with limited resources and personnel we felt compelled to share these concerns with the committee.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Landauer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Landauer
Lobbyist
Special Districts Association of Oregon