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| <b>Date:</b>    | December 11, 2024   |
| <b>To:</b>      | Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez, Members of the Joint Special Committee on Wildfire Funding |
| <b>From:</b>    | Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager Branden Pursinger                  |
| <b>Subject:</b> | Support LC 2  |

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Members of the Committee,

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) is in support of LC 2 and the financial appropriation to the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the Department of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to cover outstanding 2024 wildfire costs.

In 2010, wildfires in Oregon burned less than 100,000 acres. Between 2010 and 2019, the 10-year average increased to roughly 500,000 acres annually. In 2020, over 1 million acres (1.14) burned and in 2024 that number reached 2 million acres. Since 2010, the total area in Oregon that has burned is equivalent to the combined land mass of Massachusetts and New Jersey.

Oregon's gross wildfire costs averaged around \$11m per year from 2002 to 2012; however, from 2014 to 2024 these costs surged to an average of \$75.5m annually. 2020 and 2021 calendar years exceeded \$120m and the wildfire response costs alone in October of 2024 were \$250m and were continuing to climb. The full financial impact of the 2024 wildfires on state and local governments is not yet known, however we have an opportunity today to cover the outstanding costs at ODF and OSFM. Without the finances to cover these costs, Oregon runs the risk of not having the workforce or the vendors to fight fires in the upcoming 2025 wildfire season.

AOC has continually engaged in the development of comprehensive wildfire policies. We have always focused on thoughtful, effective, and regionally tailored solutions to wildfire mitigation, suppression and recovery. And to that end, AOC not only has a seat, but has been an active member of the Wildfire Funding Work Group being led by ODF and OSFM created through the budget note on Senate Bill 5701 (2024). As those conversations continue, it is imperative that ODF and OSFM have the resources they need to cover the costs from this last wildfire season.

AOC and the others serving on the work group are working tirelessly to bring long term wildfire funding solutions to the 2025 session. Today, the Legislature has the opportunity to fund the immediate need. AOC is urging the legislature to support LC 2 and provide necessary funding to ODF and OSFM.

**AOC urges your support of LC 2 and the \$218m financial appropriation request therein.**

**UNITED COUNTIES. UNITED OREGON.**

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