



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

House Committee on Housing Homelessness
Chair Maxine Dexter
Vice Chair Jeff Helfrich
Vice Chair Mark Gamba

Chair Dexter, Vice Chair Gamba, Vice Chair Helfrich,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council. We represent 3700 fire fighters and paramedics throughout the entire state of Oregon. This includes those employed by cities, rural fire protection districts and Regional Fire Authority. We are opposed to HB 2980. As public safety professionals we answer every call for help regardless of race, sex, economic status, religion or housing status. As caregivers for all in every single sense of those words we find our organization between dueling priorities. Our charge as sworn members is to help those in need in emergency situations such as the ravages of fire in Phoenix and Talent or those experiencing the effects of a Fentanyl Overdose. Each one of those services cost money to provide. Most of which is labor driven and even volunteers are not free. Most fire districts are solely property tax funded and therefore see any diversion of tax revenue, such as Tax Increment financing more than an existential threat to providing fire protection and Emergency Medical Service to include ambulance service in 80 percent of Oregon. While homelessness is at crisis levels through the entire state “Robbing Peter to Pay Paul” is counter intuitive to all partners in essential service whether a city or Special District.

We hope the Committee understands our opposition to HB 2980 is one of being able to serve all those in need of fire protection and EMS when the time comes for them, or a when a family member needs it. We have lived this redirection of revenue in cities and RFPD’s in our past, present, and future. Whether in Phoenix, Portland, Milwaukie, Happy Valley as just some examples of millions of dollars of redirected revenue away from essential service.

We have numerous examples of TIF projects that eventually bring increased revenues to special districts but we can’t afford to wait for the return of those cities redirection of remaining areas of tax increment financing effects with catastrophic impacts to fire protection districts across the entire state of Oregon.

Perhaps there are other solutions that don’t have such a deleterious impact to essential services. As we attempt to legislate our way out of one crisis we can avoid another.



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We thank you for the opportunity to participate in the discussion and the well-intentioned outcome of funding this crisis. It really comes down to fixing one problem that destroys essential service in Oregon.

The Oregon State Fire Fighters respectfully oppose HB 2980 and Tax Increment financing as a solution to homelessness.

Karl Koenig
President
Oregon State Fire Fighter Council