
Statement of Support SB728

I am a member of the Board of Directors for the Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) in Cave Junction, OR. I am also a member of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association (OFDDA) Board of Directors. OFDDA represents over 200 Fire Protection Districts throughout the state of Oregon.

As a board member of both organizations, I enthusiastically support SB728, which would extend a \$1,000 tax credit to qualifying volunteer firefighters. This limited time tax credit is based on certain criteria which must be met by the volunteer firefighter, as overseen by a Fire Chief or other district official.

In the Illinois Valley, we are a rural fire district, in southwestern Oregon, that struggles to maintain adequate staffing to respond to fires, motor vehicle accidents, and medical aid calls. We have six fire stations throughout our 144 square mile district, and only one of our stations has 24-hour staffing. The other five stations contain apparatus and supplies, and are not staffed. In the 2022 calendar year, we had over 1,700 calls for emergency response. With only four career firefighters, it is essential to recruit and retain volunteers to supplement our firefighter ranks and command staff.

Currently, we do not have a sufficient number of volunteer firefighters to support the needs of IVFD. This \$1,000 tax credit would be one way to help support our volunteer firefighters and the many expenses they pay out of pocket to volunteer for our fire districts throughout the state. As a small, rural district, we cannot afford to reimburse our volunteers for all of their expenses. The small amount they receive for responding to calls does not begin to cover the expenses each volunteer faces for training, equipment, and other miscellaneous direct costs associated with being a volunteer first responder.

For IVFD, our volunteers are essential to providing critical emergency response to our community. Without our volunteers, response times would be many minutes more, resulting in longer times for on-scene presence. Additionally, for IVFD, it means having fewer trained professionals to provide emergency care in what is typically a person's time of greatest need for help.

On behalf of the Illinois Valley Fire District, as well as the Oregon Fire District Directors Association, I thank you for your support of SB728.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Azevedo Johnson
Board Member

Illinois Valley Fire District *and*
Oregon Fire District Directors Association

Cheryl Azevedo Johnson

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