

The Honorable Representative Nancy Nathanson
House Committee on Revenue
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

February 13, 2024

Thank you, Chair Nathanson, vice-chairs Reschke and Walters, and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB4133. My name is Brennan Garrelts and I represent Oregon forestland owners as the *Chair of ODF's Emergency Fire Cost Committee* (EFCC) which oversees the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF) and the *Past President of the Board of Directors of Douglas Forest Protective Association* (DFPA) which provides wildland fire protection for 1.6 million acres in southwestern Oregon. I have also been a wildland firefighter for 18-seasons.

The success of Oregon's Complete and Coordinated wildfire protection system relies on a strong public/private partnership between this legislature, ODF and Oregon's rural landowners. Since 1908, when the first Forest Protective Association was established in Klamath and Lake Counties, rural landowners have played an instrumental role in funding wildland fire protection in Oregon by contributing their hard-earned dollars to pay for the local wildland firefighters protecting their lands and homes and as well paying up to \$10,000,000 annually for the cost of the large fires that plague all of Oregon each year.

This public/private model continued with Senator Steiner's workgroup where I had the privilege of representing *all* Oregonian's who currently pay into Oregon's wildland fire protection system under my responsibly as the Chair of the EFCC.

The EFCC supports HB4133 for several reasons. First, decoupling the general fund from paying for district-level wildland fire protection and shifting these costs to the local landowner funding will greatly insulate local wildfire districts from state-wide budget cuts during down revenue years. This will mean a robust wildland fire department can exist outside of the political and economic uncertainties of state-funding and give assurances to local residents that their wildland firefighting system is strong. Additionally, HB4133 will bring this funding mechanism into alignment with modern public protection institutions, like city police and fire, where local dollars pay for local protection. Finally, shifting landowner's fiscal contribution away from paying for large fire costs recognizes an important reality we live with today; large, devastating wildfires are an all-Oregonian problem and the cost for these fires should not be borne on the backs of the rural landowners whose lands are devastated by wildfires.

HB4133 also continues to acknowledge the important fiduciary role EFCC has played since its inception in 1930. Specifically, this includes fiscal oversight and auditing of large fire expenditures and associated cost-shares with federal partners, providing landowner funded grants that increase our state's ability to detect fires earlier and increase our initial attack capabilities, as well as advancing and loaning money to ODF and the operating Association Districts to support their cash-flow needs when a large fire occurs.

Finally, HB4133 broadens the representation of the committee to include not just forestland owner representatives but also grazing land owners, and codifies the representation of a small woodland owners.

I encourage you to support HB4133. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Brennan Garrelts
ODF Emergency Fire Cost Committee, Chair
Douglas Forest Protective Association Board of Directors, Past-President