



Testimony: HJR 201 and HB 4075
House Committee on Rules
February 13, 2024
Oregon Fire Chiefs Association

The Oregon Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA) represents 306 fire agencies in Oregon. Fire chiefs and all fire service members across the state have seen the loss and devastation from an increase in the intensity and duration of wildfire in Oregon.

Due to the limitations of Oregon’s tax system fire agencies in Oregon continue to struggle with basic funding needs and many agencies especially those in rural areas of Oregon are constantly under-resourced and operate with limited and often insufficient staffing – whether it be career or volunteer. Nearly half of Oregon’s fire departments rely on continuous voter approval of local option levies or bond renewals to fund operations and equipment purchases. The cost of maintaining an appropriate emergency response to fire and other emergencies in a community continues to increase. The local tax base to support these critical services has not kept pace with the costs of providing existing service levels and yet our members agencies are asked to respond to increasing call volumes and service level demands.

The Oregon Fire Chiefs Association is supportive of the intent behind HJR 201 and HB 4075 and extremely appreciative of Rep Evans’s ongoing efforts to address the needs of the Oregon fire service and to secure additional funding to address our worsening wildfire situation. The recognition of the importance to adequately fund wildfire suppression, mitigation, and response is noted and appreciated by the OFCA members.

The OFCA remains neutral in their position towards HJR 201 and HB 4075. The OFCA supports and recognizes the need for additional funding that these house bills endeavor to provide. The OFCA would appreciate clarity of the term ‘public safety’ and additional information about how the distribution of the funds would be allocated. The OFCA is interested in assuring adequate prevention and mitigation resources are provided statewide – including adding capacity and capability at the local level – while preserving our rate-payers support for local funding measures. The OFCA realizes the importance, should the bill move forward, of having a strong position at the table to provide input as to the implementation and structure of HJR 201 and HB 4075.

We look forward to continuing our work with Rep Evans as we strive to find a solution for the wildfire situation in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Chris Heppel

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President
Oregon Fire Chiefs Association

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