

Greetings, Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Committee members,

For the record, I'm Senator Todd Nash representing Senate District 29, which includes Wallowa, Union, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler, and most of Wasco and parts of Jefferson, Clackamas and Marion Counties. Senate district 29 is roughly the size of the Netherlands. The reason why I bring that up is pertinent to my strong support of SB 778 a bill that is absolutely essential to the health, safety, and economic stability of our rural communities—particularly our farmers and ranchers who face unique and life-threatening risks on a daily basis.

In Oregon's rural areas, access to timely emergency medical services can be the difference between life and death. Farmers and ranchers, who are the backbone of our state's agriculture industry, often work in remote, isolated locations. Whether it's a severe accident involving heavy machinery, a dangerous encounter with livestock, or an unforeseen health crisis, quick access to air ambulance services is vital.

However, the economic pressures on air ambulance providers in rural Oregon are undeniable. Operational costs have risen dramatically, and without adequate reimbursement, these critical services are at risk of becoming unsustainable in many areas. SB 778 addresses this challenge by ensuring that the Oregon Health Authority adjusts Medicaid reimbursement rates for air ambulance services every two years, aligning them with the National Ambulance Inflation Factor. This alignment helps guarantee that

reimbursement rates keep pace with rising operational costs, ensuring the continued viability of air ambulance providers.

For farmers and ranchers, this bill is not just a matter of convenience—it is a matter of survival. Every minute counts in an emergency, and without the ability to respond quickly with air ambulance services, lives are at risk. If air ambulance providers are unable to cover their costs due to insufficient reimbursement, we could see a decline in services or even the closure of providers in rural areas where these services are most needed.

By supporting SB 778, we are directly safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our agricultural community. We are ensuring that those who work tirelessly to feed our state and nation have access to the emergency medical services they deserve. This bill is an investment in the safety of our rural communities, ensuring that emergency care arrives swiftly and effectively when it's needed most.

We must act now to secure the future of air ambulance services for farmers, ranchers, and all Oregonians who rely on them in times of crisis. Please join me in supporting SB 778, and together, we can ensure that vital, life-saving services remain available to those who need them most.

Thank you for your time.