

To the Members of the Oregon State Legislature:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 3944. As a property owner in the WUI area, I believe this legislation is a necessary step toward improving wildfire safety and resilience across our state while balancing property rights and community protection.

This bill, although the damage has already been done, will help to relieve some of the anxiety and anger us property owners have experienced since SB 762. Primarily house valuations, ability to insure, ability to sell (our nest eggs) and the burdensome mandates for home hardening. It didn't make sense to hold the property owners responsible for catastrophic fires that occurred in our state.

Bill 3944 will help relieve landowners from the lasting impact of the erroneous and unfortunate wildfire hazard designations. This bill offers the promise of a fresh start without the burdens of past designations.

Moreover, the provisions that enhance state and local collaborations such as the establishment of a Wildfire Programs Advisory Council (Section 5) and the increased availability of financial and technical assistance through programs like the small forestland grant (Section 10) are forward-thinking measures. They provide us with practical tools to reduce wildfire risks and also foster a more coordinated approach to protecting our communities.

I believe this balanced approach is essential for maintaining the vitality of our rural communities. Whether we were born and raised here or moved here from out of State, we love our rural lifestyles. We love the independence and liberty we enjoy, and we love the beauty of Oregon. SB 762 stripped us citizens of Oregon of the peace and independence we value so dearly.

Please support HB 3499 so we can have some type of harmony as a base to move forward on ideas and implementation of programs that protect our property rights as well as our State.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this important legislation. I look forward to the positive changes this bill will bring to our State.

Sincerely,
Sheila & Chris Wickman
Gold Hill, Jackson County