



# OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters  
AFL-CIO CLC

April 6, 2025

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue  
Chair Mark Meek  
Vice Chair Mike McLane

Chair, Vice Chair and Committe members,

For the Record I'm Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council and we represent the over 3800 career fire fighters, paramedics, wildland and prevention personnel across the State of Oregon.

Our testimony is in support of SB 1177 and the -1 Amendments. In June of this last year the "Fire 35" convened and began the process of developing recommendations to the Oregon Legislature on how to fund \$280 Million dollars of fire expenditures listed in the Govenor's recommended budget.(GRB). The Fire 35 were selected from a wide variety of interests, Large and small landowners, Large Timber interests, small timber growers, dairy, cattlemen's association, environmental groups, property insurance providors, County and City Government Associations, Oregon Fire Chiefs, Special Districts Fire Section and the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council.

The Fire 35 met post short session and agreed to standard priciples and to be heard as a group regarding the GRB dollar figure and that we would "score" or only move forward with consensus from this group as it relates to funding the Oregon Wildfire Funding (OWF) In 2024 \$330 million dollars was spent on suppression and program costs between ODF and OSFM, enough so, for the Governor to call a special session to fund the net expenditures of the fire season.

We cannot make a recommendation of supporting this proposal without referring to a 1973 document that set a guiding priciples in solving the national fire problem at the time, the paper was called America Burning. It detailed multiple problems in the National Fire problem as it relates to public perception, public apathy, fire service response, fire training, fire prevention, public fire education, burn injuriues and treatment, building codes and the

roles and responsibilities each form of government, local, state and federal. This paper laid the framework for what is now the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and began the National Fire Academy to educate the Fire Service as a whole on everything fire service related by industry experts both public and private to deal with the challenges of the American fire service.

Present day Oregon Fire Service is dealing with many of the same problems detailed in the America Burning paper. Who is doing the work, the cost of performing the work, nature and focus of the work to extinguish, prevention, building construction and fire safety education. We are fortunate here in Oregon for the last five years we turned the corner on just "paying the bill" of suppression and set a new tone with the passage of SB 762 after the catastrophic fire season of 2020. Urban conflagration, entire communities destroyed over 5000 structures lost, eleven fatalities. Those were one time monies in SB 762 that did tremendous work with mitigation, home hardening, weight of attack with Pre positioning and the beginning of fire adaptive communities along with building code improvements state wide.

All the enhancements made with SB 762 monies were a start to path of successful outcomes for the entire state of Oregon. This really is an all Oregon problem and the Fire 35 came up with four main recommendation for the Legislature to consider and the Fire Trust Fund is the basis for SB 1177 and the -1 amendments. Being only one piece of the solution it is important to realize the sole impact of the kicker is not enough to cover the cost of all that is required.

We need only look at fire season 2024 to realize that an adequately staffed fire suppression team early on in fires saves lives and structures. While burning over 2 Million acres of land we lost an incredibly few structures as a result, 125 to be exact. In comparison to the 5000 lost in 2020 with half as many acres lost to fire. It is important to know it was not only suppression efforts but those areas that had home hardening prevented structural loss and prepared entire communities to deal with oncoming fire threats. The advancement of WUI Fire Codes set a tone of building fire resistant homes in the increasingly populated lands between forest and city. Keeping "small fires small" with prepositioning additional fire units in the most likely to occur fire prone areas has paid tremendous dividends too.

None of the tools to take care of Oregonian's and the challenges of the affects of fire are free. Infact they are all expensive but against the cost of an Urban Conflagration comparably affordable. This Bill funds the cost of mitigation, which over time will decrease the cost of suppression through prevention. Fire Adaptive communities work, Oregonians are less about government rules and more about results. They know that eliminating combustibles near your home keeps fire away from structures. Using fire resistive materials when building new structures is using your dollars wisely. Managing forest lands doesn't cost it pays. Managed forests do not cause reckless destructive fires.

Getting trained fire prevention personnel in those communities to create a sense of obligation to protect their land and that of their neighbors is paramount. Having enough personnel to continue pre positioning efforts is another piece of the puzzle for a fire safe Oregon. Keep small fires small. Building Code refinement and education so we can continue to live where we would like to, responsibly. Adequate suppression resources throughout Oregon is an essential piece of the solution.

The Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, as a contributing member of the Fire 35 group, would like your support and vote to move SB 1177 and the -1 amendments out of committee and on to the next step in the process.

Thank you in advance for your support,

*Karl Koenig*

Karl Koenig  
President  
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council  
karlk@osffc.org

265 Commercial Street S.E., Suite 260 • Salem, Oregon 97301 • Phone (503)540-0648  
• Fax (503)391-5878  
**[www.osffc.org](http://www.osffc.org)**