



To: Joint Ways and Means Committee
From: Commissioner Phil Chang

April 4, 2025

Co Chairs Lieber and Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the need for an adequate wildfire funding package this session.

Last fall, the state ended fire the season \$218 M in debt to the brave fire fighters who had protected us through a massive wildfire season.

We had to cover that fire fighting debt from the General Fund. We also invested too little in pre-fire mitigation across Oregon last fiscal year, making future fire fighting that much harder and more expensive and that much less effective in years to come.

So Oregon needs an adequate wildfire funding package moving forward. That means we must make adequate investments in both fire fighting and pre-fire mitigation work ... and we need to generate adequate revenue to cover those investments without depleting the General Fund.

Our wildfire seasons are getting longer and more severe. Abandoning the defensible space and home hardening requirements from SB 762 will leave more homes less safe. Please set us up to make needed investments in suppression capacity and voluntary pre-fire mitigation measures to give our homes the best chance of survival moving forward.

On the topic of wildfire resiliency, I would also like to express support for the Oregon Conservation Corps which has demonstrated huge impact in promoting community wildfire resiliency and building a future wildfire workforce in the last 4 years.

This program is delivering fuels reduction treatments at the homes of hundreds of disadvantaged Oregonians and training thousands of youth for careers in forestry, fire fighting and beyond - including right here in Warm Springs

Please include \$10 million in the HECC budget for the OCC in the 2025-27 biennium.

Phil Chang
Deschutes County Commissioner