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Written Testimony in Support of SB 5531 and the Santiam Canyon Radio Project

Co-Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of the **Santiam Canyon Radio Project (SCRP)**, a critical, multi-jurisdictional effort to modernize emergency communication systems serving our rural fire and EMS agencies.

The SCRCP seeks to upgrade an aging radio infrastructure last modernized in 2005. The equipment currently in use is obsolete, no longer in production, and increasingly unreliable. Communication breakdowns between responders, across agencies, and with dispatchers present daily risks. In an emergency, that risk can be catastrophic—for responders and for the communities we serve.

This project directly benefits numerous fire and EMS agencies, including Aumsville, Gates, Idanha-Detroit, Jefferson, Lyons, Mill City, Silverton, Stayton, Sublimity, and Turner, as well as Santiam Ambulance, Woodburn Ambulance, and fire-based EMS operations in Jefferson, Lyons, and Turner. These agencies serve rural and high-risk areas where radio reliability can be the difference between life and death.

Unfortunately, efforts to upgrade this system have been repeatedly delayed. In good faith, our agencies explored alternative regional options, including the **Marion County Radio Project**, which we support in concept. However, the financial burden of joining and sustaining membership in that system is prohibitive for the listed agencies. Even if we were to join that system, we would still be required to **maintain our existing infrastructure** for emergency alerting, local reliability up the canyon, and system redundancy. These assets would also provide a **reliable backup** to the Marion County system and benefit participating agencies during outages or failures.

The Santiam Canyon Radio Project includes:

- Hiring a specialized radio communications company
- Rebuilding system infrastructure and backhaul links
- Upgrading site-based equipment to modern, standards-compliant technology
- Purchasing new mobile and portable radios for apparatus and responders
- Ensuring reliable communication across agencies and with dispatch centers

This project will deliver **true interoperability**, improved safety, and long-overdue modernization for agencies with limited financial resources. Local budgets cannot support this upgrade without state assistance. Your support will make a measurable difference in the safety of firefighters, paramedics, and the residents we protect.

Thank you for considering this vital project.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Hume

Fire Chief, Sublimity Fire District

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