

SDAO

**FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MEDICAL SERVICES CHAPTER**

To: Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

From: Fire Chief Ben Stange
Polk County Fire District No. 1
EMS and Fire Chapter of SDAO

Date: February 3, 2026

Re: HB 4108 – Testimony in Opposition

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the committee,

My name is Ben Stange. I am the Fire Chief of Polk County Fire District No.1. I'm here today as the Fire and EMS representative and President of the Board for SDAO.

House Bill 4108 creates a new path for cities to annex non-contiguous properties into their cities. These are areas that are often served by a single or even multiple special district types.

During any annexation, our districts lose property tax revenue for the areas they provide services to. As many Oregonians have learned over the past several years, the fire service depends on many fire agencies including over 250 rural fire protection districts to coordinate not only for state-wide events, but even day to day emergencies when local resources stretch thin. Revenue lost, even when it benefits another agency, can weaken an RFPD to the point where the region becomes less resilient as a whole. This is largely addressed by the -1 amendment.

One of our concerns with the proposal was to ensure that any bonded indebtedness would not unfairly shift to remaining patrons of a district. The -1 amendment referencing ORS 222.520 gives us assurances that debt will be distributed equitably.

Aside from financial considerations, for fire agencies, patchworks of annexed non-contiguous areas create unique response and deployment challenges. Unlike parks and libraries with static locations where patrons come for service, we are focused on the delivery of services. Inconsistencies in agency responsibilities, inconsistent response areas, and varied response expectations from the public end up impacting our ability to provide coordinated, dependable, and predictable response models that are trusted by the public. Again, part 3 of the -1 amendment largely addresses these concerns.

I appreciate the bill sponsors working with SDAO to address some of our concerns. I hope we can continue to work together to ensure our special districts can continue providing the essential services to the communities that depend on them. Thank you for your time.