



Umatilla County Fire District #1

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To Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Diehl and Nelson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Scott Stanton, and I serve as Fire Chief of Umatilla County Fire District #1. I submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 4156. Our agency provides emergency medical services to approximately 48,000 residents in Western Umatilla County and a portion of Morrow County. Our ambulance service area spans more than 600 square miles, and in the most recent year we responded to over 5,000 medical calls, transporting 3761 patients to hospitals and other definitive care facilities across a largely rural region.

The Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) program is essential to sustaining EMS operations in our district. Over the past five years, Umatilla County Fire District #1 has averaged approximately \$552,000 annually in GEMT revenue. These funds have directly supported our EMS system by allowing us to increase staffing on ambulances, improving unit availability, reducing response delays, and enhancing patient care outcomes. GEMT reimbursement has also helped offset escalating costs related to personnel, training, medical equipment, and readiness costs that are particularly challenging for rural and semi-rural EMS providers.

A lapse in GEMT funding while awaiting legislative action would create immediate operational challenges for our agency. To absorb such a lapse, we would be forced to consider staffing freezes, reductions in EMS training and continuing education, delayed replacement of medical equipment, and increased strain on existing personnel. A complete loss of GEMT funding would have far more serious consequences requiring reductions in ambulance staffing levels, fewer available transport units, longer response and transport times, and increased financial pressure on local taxpayers and patients. These outcomes would directly impact access to timely emergency medical care in our service area.

Umatilla County Fire District # 1 is devoted to protecting the communities we serve by providing the highest quality of compassionate and professional services.

House Bill 4156 provides necessary stability and continuity for EMS agencies without expanding the program or increasing costs to the state. If the federal government continues to allow the current GEMT funding model, nothing changes. This legislation simply ensures that Oregon EMS providers are not left without reimbursement due to federal timing or regulatory changes. Importantly, **HB 4156 does not extend additional state funds** or create new state financial obligations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony and for your continued support of emergency medical services in Oregon. I respectfully urge your support of House Bill 4156.

Scott J Stanton
Fire Chief

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