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Testimony in Support: HB 4156
House Committee on Health Care
Submitted by: Genoa Ingram
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The Oregon Fire District Directors Association (OFDDA), formed in 1950, serves the elected public officials of over 200 Fire Protection Districts throughout Oregon, all Special Districts formed under ORS Chapter 478. The five-member governing boards, who serve without compensation, are responsible for the financial and management oversight of the Districts.

The Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association (OVFA), formed in 1957, offers an annual training conference for volunteers, both members and non-members, providing hands-on and classroom training as well as networking opportunities. These conferences rotate around the state, helping educate and train Oregon's 8,760 volunteer firefighters who must adhere to the same training requirements as paid career firefighters.

The Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) reimbursement formula for the Oregon Health Plan under Medicaid falls woefully short of the cost of providing these services. However, the demand for these transport services continues to grow as our population grows and ages. The gap between reimbursements for transports and the cost of these services has placed an unsustainable fiscal strain on Oregon's EMS system and the providing fire districts and departments. This issue is not unique to Oregon and remains a hardship that cannot continue.

Oregon GEMT currently relies on an Intergovernmental Transfer (IGT) funding mechanism required by existing statute, but the federal government has indicated it may no longer allow IGT programs. HB 4156 updates the statutory language to allow OHA to use alternative reimbursement mechanisms only if IGTs are no longer available, ensuring the GEMT program can continue without interruption and without changing how it operates today.

Constituent feedback reflects the desire of the public for fire districts to continue to provide these vital services. It is our hope that HB 4156 will help to correct the current reimbursement inequities and ease some of the financial burdens for EMS providers, including rural fire protection districts throughout the State.

On behalf of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association and the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association, we thank you for your support of HB 4156.