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My name is Drew Norris, Deputy Chief of EMS for Bend Fire & Rescue, and I am submitting testimony in support of HB 4156. Bend Fire & Rescue serves Bend, Rural Fire Protection District #2, and the surrounding region, approximately 1,450 square miles and responds to over 14,000 emergency calls each year. As a fire-based EMS system in a rapidly growing community, stable and predictable EMS funding is essential to maintaining service levels and response readiness.

GEMT funding is vital to our operation. Bend Fire & Rescue currently receives roughly one million dollars annually through GEMT, which directly supports staffing and resources required to meet our community's increasing EMS demand. This funding has allowed us to maintain staffing, avoid reductions, add positions as call volume grows, and prevent service cuts that would negatively affect patient care.

A lapse, even a temporary one, would create immediate operational challenges. Without GEMT, we would be forced to delay hiring, freeze vacancies, defer apparatus replacement and maintenance, and reduce essential training. A full-year loss would leave a significant budget shortfall that could not be corrected until the next legislative session, placing core EMS services at risk during a time of ongoing increased call volume and population growth.

It is important to emphasize that HB 4156 does not require new state funding and makes no changes if the federal government continues to allow IGTs. Instead, it simply ensures Oregon ambulance providers can continue receiving GEMT reimbursement without interruption should federal policy shift. This stability is critical to protecting EMS systems across Oregon, including ours.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for your commitment to Oregon's EMS system. On behalf of Bend Fire & Rescue and the Rural Fire Protection District #2, I respectfully ask for your support of HB 4156.

Sincerely,

Drew Norris
Deputy Chief EMS
Bend Fire & Rescue
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