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

My name is Brian P. Burke Sr., Fire Chief for North Douglas County Fire & EMS, based in Drain, Oregon. I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 4156. Our agency provides fire and EMS services to the communities of Drain, Yoncalla, Elkton, Kellogg, Scottsburg, Curtin, Cottage Grove, and Oakland. We respond to approximately 1,500 EMS calls annually and complete over 600 ambulance transports each year.

GEMT funding has been important to maintaining reliable ambulance service in our rural response area. Depending on the year, our agency received \$142,491 in the fiscal year ending 2024 and \$69,276 in fiscal year 2025. For the current fiscal year, we have received \$800 so far. We have been informed that GEMT payments are nearly two years behind. We also paid \$16,000 as part of program participation and have not received funding in return to date. When GEMT funds do arrive, they help us sustain staffing, maintain and replace equipment, cover maintenance costs, and support training. They should also help us build toward purchasing a replacement ambulance in the near future.

Without continuity protections, any lapse in GEMT funding would force immediate, real-world operational decisions. To absorb a short-term funding gap, we would likely need to defer maintenance and equipment replacement, reduce discretionary training, and delay readiness improvements that directly support patient care. A total loss of GEMT funding would be even more severe, requiring service reductions or new local revenue strategies. Either outcome would put rural access and response reliability at risk.

HB 4156 is a practical safeguard. If the federal government continues to allow the current funding approach, nothing should change. If the current approach is no longer allowed, HB 4156 allows the Oregon Health Authority to use an alternative funding method so agencies can continue to receive GEMT funds without interruption. This protects patient access to emergency medical services, and it does not request new state funding to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask you to support HB 4156.

Sincerely,

Brian P. Burke Sr.

Fire Chief

North Douglas County Fire & EMS