



LANE COUNTY

Vanessa Cornwall, Intergovernmental Relations

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RE: Support HB 4156

House Committee on Healthcare

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Diel and Nelson and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Eve Gray and I am the Director of Health & Human Services for Lane County. I am here today testifying in support of HB 4156.

As you likely know, counties in Oregon are responsible for creating ambulance service plans and running procurements for ambulance services in their counties. We are required to ensure that every part of the county has access to ambulance services. Two years ago, we were notified by one of our ambulance providers that they may terminate their contract to provide services. This provider serves an extremely rural area. They have relatively few calls resulting in transport, which is the only reimbursable service EMS offers, and they cover a large geography. In preparation for a possible reduction in ambulance providers in our community, I began asking other Lane County agencies if they would consider taking over the ambulance service area. The answer was a resounding no, due to every ambulance agency in Lane County suffering losses and not knowing whether they had a sustainable future.

In October, 2024, the Lane County Board of Commissioners authorized the EMS funding task force to convene. This task force includes staff and elected representatives from every EMS provider who has an ambulance service area assigned, and the county. As we are gathering more data, the reality we face is stark. Revenues have consistently not kept up with expenses, and local governments do not have the general fund to make up the difference. All agencies are deeply concerned about the potential for major service reductions or closures. This is occurring at a time when call volumes are higher than ever for many agencies, and some regularly run out of available ambulances.

Ensuring the continuation of GEMT funding for ambulance services is an essential step toward maintaining availability of ambulance services in every part of the state. We continue working locally to identify options for revenue, or consolidation or reductions in services if we are unable to identify increased revenue, but losing a critical source of historical revenue at this time would put our ambulance system at significant risk. Thank you for your support of this important bill.

ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED BY VANESSA CORNWALL,
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS OFFICER FOR LANE COUNTY