

Date:	February 5th, 2026
To:	Chair Tran, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Watanabe, Members of the Emergency Management and Veterans Committee
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager Tim Dooley
Subject:	HB 4121 - Support

For the record, my name is Tim Dooley for the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments. AOC is here in strong support of HB 4121.

Emergency management is a function that counties are mandated to provide by statute, but we cannot do this in a vacuum without the statewide partners we have in OEM, ODHS OREM, and the state resilience officer. This bill takes both a big picture look at the infrastructure needed at the state level and zooms down to the micro level to assist local governments and community organizations in our preparedness for when the next disaster occurs and to fund recovery efforts by local governments and nonprofits.

As I spoke to the committee about during fall leg days, there is substantial uncertainty around the commitment from our federal partners to states and local governments. Instead of waiting for that uncertainty to be resolved, Oregon needs to forge ahead with thinking about how we prepare, respond, and recover from disasters on our own. This bill does a lot of that work, from adding further funding for the CORE3 project in Deschutes County to creating the framework for both public and individual assistance grant programs to mirror the FEMA programs that can help households and local governments recover after disasters.

As we saw after the Rowena fire, just because a disaster has a significant local impact that exceeds the ability of residents and local governments alike to recover, it does not mean that we would meet the current FEMA thresholds for accessing federal disaster funding. This becomes increasingly unlikely if, as reported, FEMA moves forward with increases in the thresholds and lowers the matching funds level they will provide. In Rowena, the state had to cobble together an adhoc process to fund the cleanup costs via an E-board appropriation. That should not be repeated.

This will not be an easy or cheap lift. But every dollar that we invest in our preparedness now will pay off multiple times over in the future when the next inevitable disaster arrives and Oregon is more ready to respond and recover. We urge an aye vote.

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