



Klamath County Fire District 1
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February 3, 2026

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

My name is Brent Knutson, and I am the Fire Chief for Klamath County Fire District 1 (KCFD1). I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB 4156. KCFD1 serves approximately 60,000 permanent residents within a 200-square-mile fire district boundary and a 490-square-mile ambulance service area. At the heart of our district is the City of Klamath Falls, the largest city in Klamath County, with a population of approximately 51,000 residents within a 20-square-mile urban growth boundary. KCFD1 is unique in that we are the only fully paid fire department in the county and the only 24/7 ALS ambulance service. While we have strong mutual aid partners, they are largely volunteer-based, requiring our agency to remain operationally self-sufficient. In 2025, KCFD1 responded to more than 9,300 incidents, nearly 7,000 of which were EMS-related.

As a rural county with limited industry, KCFD1 relies heavily on EMS revenue and GEMT funding to continue providing the level of service our residents and visitors deserve and expect. GEMT funding has allowed us to reduce employee turnover compared to pre-GEMT years and has supported critical investments in personnel, training, equipment, and apparatus. Due to our rural location, the pool of qualified applicants is limited, making employee retention a top priority, and GEMT funding has played a key role in supporting workforce stability.

The loss of GEMT funding would have detrimental impacts not only on KCFD1 but also on our mutual aid partners who rely on us to provide ALS patient care throughout the county. Potential impacts of a lapse or loss of GEMT funding include staffing reductions, delayed response times, increased strain on mutual aid responses, and reduced ability to provide the most up-to-date patient care.

HB 4156 adds language to existing law that allows the Oregon Health Authority to utilize alternative funding mechanisms should the current Intergovernmental Transfer (IGT) program be disallowed by the federal government. If the federal government continues to accept IGTs, nothing will change. However, if IGTs are no longer permitted, this bill ensures that GEMT funding can continue without interruption. Importantly, this legislation does not expand the program or require additional state funding.

Thank you for your service and for the opportunity to submit testimony. I respectfully ask for your support of HB 4156.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Knutson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brent Knutson
Fire Chief