

Submitter: John Bartley
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management and Veterans
Measure, Appointment or HB4121
Topic:

To: Representative Tran, Chair
House Committee on Emergency Management and Veterans
Re: In Support of House Bill 4121

Dear Chair Tran and Committee Members:

I write in support of House Bill 4121, as it is unmistakable that Oregon will face disasters, soon, disasters certain to severely threaten the lives of Oregonians. I volunteered my way through recovery after multiple hurricanes, before arriving in Oregon. Since then I served as a Neighborhood Emergency Team member, Disaster Action Team leader, Disaster Response coordinator, and board officer of a county Amateur Radio Emergency Service, before the disability which forced my retirement. I still invest my time and money in preparing for my community's disaster needs, and therefore wish to express three concerns regarding HB4121 as it now stands, based on my experience in disaster response and disaster preparedness.

The views expressed herein are my own, and I do not wish to speak for any organization I currently support or historically served.

It is commendable that §13 of HB4121 would mandate the creation of an All-Hazards Statewide Responder Database. May I ask for a similar, opt-in database to track Oregonians with disabilities, so we can be assured of the chance of rescue in the disasters we have so often heard are inevitable? I heard from the Oregon Disability Commission in a recent joint meeting with the Disability Emergency Management Advisory Committee that identifying people with disabilities is key to assuring they have the aid needed to evacuate if required in disaster, so these Oregonians are not left to sit alone in the cold and the dark, wondering if they will ever receive aid.

Does your local fire department know who is disabled near you and will therefore need help evacuating when disaster strikes? Please ask your fire chief how they plan to find the disabled who need help in evacuating, especially when cellphone network infrastructure overloads and fails, then act in revising this bill accordingly. Telecommunications was my career before retirement, and my nephew, a senior engineer for a major cellular provider, has been frank about cellphone system fragility even with recent innovations (e.g., Cellphone towers On Wheels, and satellite connectivity).

(1) We need an opt-in list of who will need help, prepared in advance.

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§19 mandates the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training shall convene an advisory board to advise the department on emergency resilience strategy. However, none of the advisory board members described in paragraph 2 of that section is focused on the needs of disaster noticing, evacuation, shelter care needs, or recovery needs of Oregonians with disabilities.

(2) Who will speak for the disabled, who will need more help to survive?

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Nine new fiscal accounts, separate and distinct from the General Fund, would be created by the present form of HB4121:
§03 Regional Facilities Account
§05 Regional Stockpile Support Account
§07 Regional Training Account
§09 Statewide Continuity of Governance Account
§11 Strategic Partnership Account
§26 Oregon Disaster Recovery Authority Fund
§27 Oregon Preparedness Grant Account
§38 Oregon Public Assistance Grant Program Account, and
§40 Oregon Individual Assistance Grant Program Account, all to receive lottery funds to be disbursed by a new Statewide Preparedness Authority for Response Coordination as specified in §15 therein.

Given that emergency notification is utterly dependent on Oregon Public Broadcasting, as KOPB is the central linchpin in the current structure of emergency notification to the public, I feel §27 should be expanded to include Oregon Public Broadcasting, especially in light of the dissolution of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and consequential defunding of NPR and OPB.

(3) Please make sure OPB has the funding needed for the Emergency Alert System to function.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

John E. Bartley, retired in Washington County, Oregon