



From: **Chief Brian Stewart**
Clackamas Fire District
Oregon Fire Chiefs Association

Chief Ben Stange
Polk County Fire District No. 1
EMS and Fire Chapter of SDAO

Date: **February, 5, 2026**

Re: **SB 1551 – Testimony in Neutral Position**

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA) and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) Fire and EMS Chapter, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding SB 1551.

OFCA represents fire chiefs and senior fire service leaders from municipal, county, and special district fire agencies across Oregon. The SDAO Fire and EMS Chapter represents special district fire and emergency service providers that deliver essential life safety services to communities throughout the state. Our organizations are neutral on SB 1551 as a whole. Our purpose today is not to advocate for or against the bill in its entirety, but to share perspective from the fire service on the wildfire environment Oregon now faces and support proven risk mitigation techniques.

Oregon's wildfire risk has changed drastically over the past several decades – doubling acreage burned decade over decade. Fire behavior, fire season length, and the interaction between wildfire and the built environment are no longer what they were when many land-use decisions, subdivision approvals, and community governance documents were created. The passage of key legislation such as SB 762 and HB 3940 signal that Oregon recognizes that wildfire is the norm in Oregon and will be for decades.

Within that context, OFCA and SDAO Fire and EMS Chapter strongly support the concepts of home hardening and defensible space as they are proven methods to reduce structure loss and increase community resiliency during wildfire events. These methods are evidence-based risk-reduction tools that directly affect outcomes when wildfires occur. Communities that incorporate them are demonstrably more resilient.

At the same time, we recognize that many planned communities, homeowners associations, and similar governance structures were established years—or decades—ago, under a very different risk of wildfire risk. Covenants, conditions, restrictions, and design standards adopted in those earlier periods were not written with

today's fire environment in mind. SB 1551 works to allow individuals within these communities the opportunity to reduce the risk of losing their homes or other property.

We understand that any policy has various perspectives and recognize the importance of deliberate and thoughtful conversations with stakeholders. We encourage home hardening and defensible space and would welcome the opportunity to participate in any conversations where we may be helpful.

While our members support the underlying goal of reducing wildfire risk to Oregon communities through proven concepts like home hardening and defensible space, OFCA and SDAO Fire and EMS Chapter are neutral on SB 1551 as a whole. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. We remain available as a technical and operational resource as discussions on this bill continue.