

February 6, 2026

Chair Rep. Nathanson

Vice-Chair Rep. Reschke and Rep. Walters

House Committee on Revenue

900 Court St. NE

Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 4134 -1: Support for Amendment 1 to HB 4134: Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC)

Dear Chair Nathanson and Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters:

We are pleased to provide testimony on HB 4134 -1 Amendment, specifically related to the inclusion of the Oregon Conservation Corps at 0.1% in HB 4134.

Originally established in 2021 under SB 762, the Oregon Conservation Corps serves the dual purpose of building the **resource management workforce of tomorrow** and **ensuring healthy, fire-adapted habitats and landscapes in Oregon.**

Oregon Conservation Corps has significant co-benefits to healthy wildlife from the wildfire protection work it completes. Just as importantly, the program invests in resource management workforce development which is critical for maintaining an Oregon-grown workforce to manage our remarkable natural resources.

This innovative initiative has achieved meaningful community protection while training the next generation of natural resources workforce, reaching youth and communities that have traditionally been underserved and/or left behind.

Since OCC was established, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission organized an Advisory Committee, built a grant process, and has managed dozens of OCC grant awards to Oregon's leading youth development organizations including:

- Northwest Youth Corps
- Lomakatsi Restoration Project

- Heart of Oregon Corps
- Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
- Ecostudies Institute
- Ant Farm Youth Services
- Integral Youth Services
- Phoenix School of Roseburg
- Community Service Consortium
- Eastern Oregon Workforce Board
- Alternative Youth Activities
- Fortaleza Atravez Barreras (planning grant)
- Wallowa Resources

These competitively selected organizations partner with the Office of the State Fire Marshall, local fire chiefs, and the Oregon Department of Forestry to ensure the highest priority sites are selected. These targeted small acreage projects often provide the “missing link” to fire agencies’ ability to address the highest priority risks within their jurisdiction and to local communities and habitats. And it is working.

For example, in the 2025 Flat Fire near Sisters, young adults in the Oregon Conservation Corps’ Heart of Oregon Corps/COIC training programs had recently treated significant acreage to ensure fire adapted resilience on properties directly adjacent to sensitive habitats in the steep Whychus Creek canyon and near the Deschutes Land Trust’s habitat preserves. These treatments protected wildlife, habitats, and communities, all while creating job training opportunities for local disadvantaged youth and young adults.

The committed investment the Legislature has made to the OCC since 2021 has garnered attention from across the West. The OCC has made significant progress on building the workforce needed to help protect Oregon habitats and communities from increasing wildfire risk. Since its inception in January 2022, the program has treated a total of 165,000 hours of boots on the ground impact across 75 different Oregon zip codes, and training over 1,600 youth and young adults. Without continued support from the state, the public/private partnerships that drive these outcomes will be put at risk.

Within HB4134 -1, Oregon Conservation Corps provides solutions for

- **Community Wildfire protection**
- **Resource Management workforce development**
- **Healthy landscapes for wildlife**

The following organizations collectively urge you to support HB 4134 -1 and Oregon Conservation Corps:



LOMAKATSI
RESTORATION PROJECT



COLC

Sincerely,

Laura M Handy, Executive Director
Heart of Oregon Corps