



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

February 23, 2026

Oregon Senate
Senate Committee on Health Care
Chair Senator Deb Patterson
Vice Chair Senator Cederic Hayden

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and Committee Members,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council. We represent the 3800 fire fighters, paramedics, EMT's, fire prevention and Wildland professionals across the 98,000 square miles known as Oregon. We are the organization that represents the largest number EMT's, including Basic, Advanced, Intermediate and Paramedic levels in Oregon.

We are in support of HB 4156 the GEMT Bill before the Senate after a unanimous Committee on Health Care today. In 2016 the OSFFC championed Oregon's legislative efforts in developing the process to qualify for Ground Emergency Medical Transport (GEMT). This is the first addition of real dollars in regards to Medicaid Emergency Transports. The Oregon Fire Service provides over 80 percent of the emergency ambulance service in Oregon and these dollars brought stability and added service capacity to the GEMT participating departments and fire districts.

This bill is an answer to the potential elimination of the Federal payment process called Intergovernmental Transfer (IGT) process. Oregon currently reimburses participating fire ambulance providers through this process. It is unknown if this will occur, but the impact of the elimination of GEMT funding would be disastrous to the Fire Based EMS System as a whole.

We cannot stress enough the lack of an alternative "in the wings" option is truly not an option. Paramedic levels are already strained across the state and in the absence of funding from the Federal Government, our service levels will have no choice but decrease.

Our EMS system is experiencing double digit growth in call volume along with longer out of service times, increased ambulance and equipment costs making functional options a required plan moving forward. While this plan uses no General Funds it does use the leverage of the General Fund to keep funding options available.

To reiterate, the passage of HB 4156 allows for the adaptation to a new set of funding rules if the elimination of the current IGT process changes. This planning is essential in the event of change and not requiring the cessation of Fire based EMS Transport funding and the deleterious consequence of losing this funding, which last year was over \$18 million dollars for the Fire based EMS providers.

The Oregon State Fire Fighters Council urge passage of HB 4156 in Senate Healthcare Committee to provide potential options in an everchanging political environment, specifically Medicaid ambulance transportation and overall financial along with service level impacts. This bill received unanimous votes in House Committee and on the House Floor last week.

Questions? Please let us know.

Karl Koenig
President
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council

www.osffc.org