



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

Chair Andrea Salinas
House Committee on Health Care

Chair Salinas, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Nosse and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, here to voice our support for HB 4016.

This bill fosters innovative responses to serving our aging population and their need for Oregon's Emergency Medical System (EMS).

When a need arises your Oregon Fire District's respond without fail. While call volumes escalate from 5 to 25% annually across Oregon every year, with an aging population being a significant portion, we need strategies to make certain each person's needs are met.

Escalating call volumes and flat increases in EMS staffing shrink our ability to answer 911 calls for service. Whether calls for service are fire or medical related, it is very challenging to keep response times down to industry standards.

As a matter of percentages, the cost of health care doubles beginning at age 70. HB 4016 has the potential to reduce costs in the health care system by reducing unnecessary hospital admissions.

Oregon's emergency responders answer every call in every part of the state without prejudice to meet everyone's immediate needs. The public's medical emergency often times does not equate to a life ending emergency for first responders. Herein lies the challenge. One option is to change the 911 criteria for an immediate response, however, this relies on near perfect information given to and decisions by the Dispatcher, which has proven problematic over the last 20 years.

There are some success stories that are small in scale, yet high in impact for the communities they serve, and this bill will help foster more of those success stories. Community paramedics for example are one potential option that this bill could fund and bring real relief for repeated calls for assistance and get the correct resource to meet the needs of our aging population. Whether it be readmission to the hospital, fall prevention or staff training, Community Fire

Paramedics bring the trust of mission and sense of security to one of our most vulnerable populations.

This Bill will give Oregon's most resourceful group of first responders the needed revenue to prove that non-traditional response can be cost effective for both the patients, caregivers and Fire District's across the entire State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Karl Koenig /s

Karl Koenig
President
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council

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