



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

Chair Anna Williams
Vice Chair Gary Leif
House Committee on Human Services
2021 Legislative Session

February 3, 2021

Chair Williams, Vice Chair Leif, Committee Members,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, with the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council representing the 3500 career union fire fighters and paramedics across Oregon.

Today I'm speaking in favor of House Bill 2397 Senior Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Innovation Pilot Project.

As Paramedics and EMT's over the last 40 years we have done more with less as a profession while the communities we serve are growing, aging and have serious safety net issues. To name a few challenges, the Opioid Abuse epidemic, COVID 19, access to correct care and the inevitable, aging. As we all get older the needs of society are changing. HB 2397 is the first step in recognizing the importance of funding innovation and service to our most vulnerable and at times unfortunately underserved.

I would be remiss not to identify our current Community Paramedics and the outreach in making EMS efficient and get the right level of care for those in need, whether accessed by 911 or direct call. Besides the obvious COVID 19 Vaccination efforts, they include working with hospitals and nursing facilities on getting patients triaged to the correct level of long-term care, placing seniors into the growing Adult Foster Care Space, assisting Veterans to services they need to improve their lives and living situation, also accessing critical Opioid Treatment for those most vulnerable to include our senior population.

This Bill funds innovation projects and opportunities in taking care of our senior population by responsibly using funds generated by our Senior Living providers across Oregon.

Throughout Oregon your fire fighters and paramedics respond without fail on each request for service regardless of need or socio-economic status.

This Bill can do many things for so many seniors, along with the opportunity comes improved measurable humanistic outcomes as we strive to take care of those who needs are not always heard. Oregon's fire service EMS providers are dedicated to getting patients to the right place at the right time and keep them there.. We know those needs continue to evolve with technology, protocols and compassionate human interaction.

HB 2397 provides opportunity to responsibly explore solutions in taking care of a growing senior population.

Your Fire Fighters and Paramedics urge a unanimous Yes in Committee vote on HB 2397.

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