

April 8, 2021

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 762. My name is Phil Chang. I am one of three Deschutes County Commissioners, the former manager of Oregon's Federal Forest Restoration Program, and an architect and early coordinator of the Deschutes and Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaboratives.

Three weeks ago when I had the chance to testify before you on SB 248 I described how under current law there are numerous barriers to effective application of the R 327 building codes to new home construction even if local governments adopt them. The "Infill exception" is likely the most problematic piece.

SB 762 will allow the R 327 building codes to be applied in the places where wildfire resilient building material requirements are needed. The bill will also require defensible space for all homes in the appropriate wildfire prone areas.

SB 762 includes a lot of other great elements:

- Identifies the parts of Oregon at greatest risk of devastating fires
- Improves the health and resiliency of our forests and reduces hazardous fuels loads
- Builds our capacity to implement prescribed fire and to fight unwanted fires
- Protects vulnerable populations from wildfire smoke impacts ... and ...
- Helps reduce wildfire risk to communities by creating a Wildfire Workforce Corps
- And ensures we have the funds and the financial oversight to get the job done

I want to close by saying that it is urgent that we pass this legislation and get to work as soon as possible. We all got to witness a devastating wildfire season across the state last September. Less than 2 weeks ago, in late March, here in Deschutes County we had multiple fire starts and 47 MPH winds. One of those fires burned 211 acres and caused hundreds of evacuations. Some people have said to me that winds like that only occur once per year so don't worry too much. I say that we are so lucky that those winds didn't occur on a day where temperatures were in the 80s, humidity was low, and the fuels were dry.

Lets do everything we can to improve the chances that our communities and homes will survive the next time extreme wildfire weather happens. Please pass SB 762. Thank you.

Phil Chang
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