



NW FIRE DIVERSITY COUNCIL

TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN, PEOPLE OF COLOR, AND OTHER UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS WORKING IN THE FIRE SERVICE IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

HB2373 Testimony: Lani J. Hill, Deputy Fire Marshal Portland Airport Fire & Rescue

For the past 14 years I have held the position of Deputy Fire Marshal for Portland Airport Fire & Rescue where I serve on many committees including PAF&R Fire DEI Committee, Port of Portland Women Development Network, Pop Culture , and Safe Place for LGBTQx. Most recently, I worked with our HR executive leadership to update the Port wide Fair Treatment Policy I am an active member of the Oregon Fire Marshals Association, IAAI, NFPA, NFSA, and ICC. One of my many passions is community outreach and connecting with those who are interested in Fire and EMS careers. I am currently the President of the Northwest Fire Diversity Council (NWFDC) an Oregon non-profit whose mission is to increase the number of Women, People of Color, and other Underrepresented Groups working in the fire service in Oregon and Washington.

Prior to taking the position at PAF&R, I was a Firefighter/ Lieutenant for Portland Air Base Fire & Rescue, (Oregon Military Department, State of Oregon) for 9 years. I was a firefighter for the 142nd Fighter Wing of the Oregon Air National Guard for 4 years, and lastly, I was a Wildland Firefighter out of Fort Rock District in Bend Oregon for 3 years. I am a mother, a wife, a sister, an auntie, and hope to empower and inspire a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive fire service.

Speaking from experience, as a woman who has dedicated her entire career to fighting fire, fire preventions, and the fire life safety profession, there is no better time than now for Oregon to pass House Bill 2373. This bill will provide opportunity to women and people of color throughout the state that otherwise would not have the opportunity or exposure to a career in the fire service.

Apprenticeships will allow these individuals the ability to gain knowledge, develop skills, improve physical fitness , and develop a fire culture that are valuable to job opportunities, not to mention earning a family wage vs/ a living wage and possible college credits while doing so. Other trade industries and unions already have apprenticeship programs and have for years. (i.e. sprinkler fitters, line workers, electricians, plumbers, and iron workers) just to name a few in Oregon- Fire is simply behind the times This is especially highlighted at one of the largest female recruitments of the year, Women in the Trade's Career Fair, where hundreds of students and women come to seek a career path and get inspired by other females who are working non-traditional jobs. This was created in 1993 which once again emphasizes how behind the times we are with HB2373.

HB2373 will increase the number of women and people of color working in the fire service. Once again, using statistics from Oregon Tradeswomen, Oregon has twice the national average of female trade

apprenticeships which in turn means more women and people of color in the trades the numbers are directly related to apprenticeship opportunities.

If you were to research the work that other communities have accomplished in the Northwest, you would find Cal-JAC Commission and Washington State JATC (Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee). Both surrounding states have successfully developed and promoted training programs and recruitment of women and BIPOC candidates. Apprenticeships provide the value of true-life credit and reach a broad range of successful candidates who can enter a career of firefighting.

Oregon fire service on the other hand, only has a 6% female workforce and less than 2% identify as a person of color. We need to do better, and we should do better when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Oregon's Fire Service is never closed, we are there on the front line no matter what events are presented from catastrophic fires to pandemic response, COVID immunization clinics, Command and Control leadership at Oregon Emergency Management and Oregon Health Authority center while maintaining everyday needs of Oregon residents and visitors. We have made the commitment to serve all communities and we should reflect all communities.

Currently we have up to 1200 career fire service professionals who are eligible to retire. Oregon does not have the capacity to train or outfit the loss and needs to come up with a plan to keep pace with the upcoming retirements. Oregon is approximately 400 fire fighters short to meet national standards for daily staffing. This program could at inception provide a meaningful impact in the communities statewide as well as ravaged by wildfire.

The fire apprenticeship program meets Action item #3- making Oregon more resilient, and action item #5 creating opportunities for Oregonians (workforce development) of Governor Kate Browns 10-point Economic Recover Plan to address the existing disparities that Oregon is currently facing.

Oregon has an opportunity to establish a lifelong impact on our community and state. HB 2373 is a step toward a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable future in the fire service.

Thank you,

Lani J. Hill