



TO: Ways & Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

FROM: Cindy Robert  
For the American Institute of Architects Oregon

DATE: April 26, 2021

RE: HB 5028 - OSFM budget

For the last three years I have been working with a group of architects and engineers who simply want to help Oregon in an emergency. In 2019, the legislature unanimously supported legislation enacting policy for a process that allows them to, but we still have not provided needed funding to enact. The amount needed is relatively small in comparison to the benefit should Oregon and her citizens face a natural disaster. *Please allow me to explain...*

HB 2206 (2019) created the Oregon Safety Assessment program (ORSAP) to credential qualified professionals to act as volunteer building assessors following a major disaster. This bill received unanimous support - what it did not receive is funding. In 2020, we tried again for needed financing for the Oregon State Fire Marshal, and in 2021 we introduced HB 2881 and HB 2892. Partial funding has been added to HB 2851, but should that fail, we will again see the ORSAP program suspended.

This Oregon Safety Assessment program provides for an organized, consistent, and coordinated post-disaster safety assessment program of structures - this will be a critical piece in the toolbox when Oregon needs to recover after a large natural disaster. The program covers all types of hazards of all size - an earthquake, a tsunami, flooding, even fire - when a jurisdiction declares an emergency.

Thankfully, not all structures fail in a disaster. This program will identify safe structures, structures that need specific repairs and structures that are unsafe for people to return to. How does that happen? The program certifies qualified professionals to act as volunteers who can assist local building departments that will be overwhelmed with assessment needs. These professionals have paid for their own training in programs often subsidized by organizations like AIA. They are trained architects and engineers who simply want to serve.

The cost to the state is in the credentialing - the Oregon State Fire Marshal develops and administers a formal system to make sure volunteers are qualified and provides them with ID cards to allow jurisdictions to quickly confirm who is an expert and put them to work. Because WA and CA have Safety Assessment Programs, much of what Oregon needs for start-up is available and is already under review at OSFM who will work to add requirements specific to Oregon's fire & life safety regulations. Many of the architects at AIA Oregon are already credentialed in WA & CA and want to provide the same service here at home. Developing and administering the program will cost the Oregon State Fire Marshall less than \$300,000 per year.

The coordinated work of the Oregon Public Safety Assessment program will facilitate faster recovery by getting people back into safe buildings - their homes and businesses - sooner. This program will decrease shelter needs and help emergency managers to focus on the necessities of the most vulnerable. It will save the State money, time and potentially lives should a disaster occur

Funding the Oregon Safety Assessment Program now is good public safety planning – we don't have to wait until after a disaster and react with legislation – this is a piece of preparation we can implement now. **We ask you to consider increasing the OSFM budget by \$600,000 to implement this program.** *Thank you.*