



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2927  
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek  
February 11, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this proposal brought forward by Chair Evans, who I know has put years of bipartisan work into this bill.

The COVID-19 pandemic, its economic fallout, the September wildfires, and the harmful algal blooms disrupting Salem's drinking water just two years ago have clearly shown the ongoing risks we face as a state. I want to credit all the many individuals across the state who have done amazing work in our existing emergency management structure to respond to crises and help Oregonians in need. Given what we've learned from these ongoing, overlapping disasters, I agree with Chair Evans that we should take the opportunity this year to restructure our emergency management response in a way that prepares us for the future.

House Bill 2927 is a necessary organizational shift for the agencies, departments, and local and regional entities that handle the bulk of our state's emergency response work. Provisions of the bill are responsive to parts of the [after-action review](#) completed last November, which outlines areas for improvement in our handling of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Two points from that review stand out to me:

- 1) Communication plans need to be critically reviewed and updated with Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC), vulnerable populations, and access and functional needs populations centered in the response.
- 2) Coordinated, strategic operational communication with local, state, tribal and federal partners is critical to a successful response.

House Bill 2927 operationalizes these and other recommendations by establishing clear division of labor, more inclusive planning, and improving channels of communication. We will be much better equipped for future catastrophic events with this bill.