

Dear Representatives,

I hope this message finds you well.

I write to you today to encourage you to move forward with bill HB4097 in support of volunteer firefighters and the extraordinary service they provide communities across Oregon. I will briefly tell you about a personal connection I have to volunteer firefighting to highlight the many ways I see their impact in our state.

My best friend, Jasmine Zimmer Stucky, has been a volunteer firefighter for almost five years now in Corbett. She and her husband purchased a two acre farm there which they manage in addition to working full time in other sectors. Jasmine is an exemplary citizen, contributing upwards of 20 hours per week as a volunteer firefighter to help people and property in her community. She has completed extra training to advance her medical scope of practice, regularly implements new skills she has learned at drill, as well as being an advocate for rural communities in all aspects of her life. When I visit Jasmine, which is often, she will regularly be gone for hours at night to respond to calls. She does swift water rescue, fights fire, goes on medical calls, is exposed to toxic fumes as cars burn in auto accidents and has assisted in digging out deceased persons after landslides. All this and more, she does without salary. She, like countless other volunteer firefighters, is an integral member of her community, and of our greater Oregon community.

As an Oregonian I rely on volunteer firefighters to respond to calls from traffic accidents to large fires when the event happens outside of a city limit. As we all travel around the state to enjoy the natural beauty and visit friends and family we all benefit from the hard work of so many people like Jasmine who commit significant parts of their lives to helping others. Jasmine's fire department has an aging population. As the older firefighters begin to age out there is a gap where younger volunteers are needed. Being away from a wage-earning job, or ones' children comes with inherent sacrifice and many people Jasmine's age are unwilling to commit to the regular training and drill that comes with being a part of a volunteer department. We need people in the earlier and middle stages of their lives to join the ranks of the volunteer departments to keep the departments going. Providing small incentives such as the one proposed in HB 4097 could help encourage more young people to become volunteer firefighters and help support our communities.

HB4097 requests a small tax break for people who put their health and lives on the line to protect the rest of us. If possible I would hope for greater benefits to be extended to firefighters like Jasmine who work so hard and give so much. That said, as the bill currently reads it seems like a solid start to compensate in a small way a group of people who give so much to our public good. As a taxpayer I fully support providing this tax break (and any other benefits we could extend) to all volunteer firefighters and I ask you to honor their hard work and sacrifice by making forward progress with this bill. I hope to never be the one in direct need of the services, however it is comforting to know there are so many people like Jasmine in Oregon who are on call should we have an emergency. I reside with my husband at 2220 Van Buren St. in Eugene and am available for further questions or comments as necessary.

Thank you,

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