



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

House Committee on Business and Labor
Chair Representative Paul Holvey
Vice Chair Lucetta Elmer
Vice Chair Nathan Sosa
2023 Legislative Session

February 19, 2023

Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, representing the 3700 career fire fighters, EMT's and Paramedic's throughout Oregon. We are in favor of HB 2294 and the \$20 Million dollars for the Apprentice Fire Program or the Oregon State Fire Fighter Joint Apprentice Training Committee. This funding ask is for 90 apprentice fire fighters and 10 fire districts or departments it adds to the 27 apprentice fire fighters funded to date. Those locations are Jackson County Fire District #5, Clackamas Fire District #1, Eugene Springfield Fire. We are proud to announce Mid-Columbia Fire District in The Dalles and Klamath Fire District #1 as our latest Apprentice partners of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (OSFFJATC). We are so fortunate that the Oregon State Fire Marshal's office funded both Mid-Columbia and Klamath #1 with \$1.5 Million for each site and six (6) apprentice fire fighters at each site.

This program is unique in so many different aspects. Diversification of our candidates, by reaching out to non-traditional groups of prospective applicants we have generated an incredible interest in being a fire fighter. Exactly what we had hoped for. The recent recruitment of applicants at Clackamas Fire District brought 436 individuals to the Apprentice Fire Fighter application process. Of which 384 identified in one of our target applicant groups 30% whom identified as BIPOC, 20% female, 10% Veteran. For comparison the current make up of career fire fighters in Oregon are approximately 2% BIPOC, 9 % female, 5% veteran which is double or better for our current workforce. To include Jackson County Fire District #5 we are increasing our workforce goals by over 50%.

The other goals have to do with training an employable apprentice when completed with the two-year program. With two of our 9 apprentices already in permanent career positions, saving the new employer some \$60,000 in new employee academy costs. The apprentice program at OSFFJATC is already saving fire departments money and time in getting new employees online and part of a crew a minimum 16 weeks sooner than a traditional off the street hire would take.



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The Weight of attack is another product of the OSFFJATC. Our first active apprentices on the street are in Jackson County Fire District #5 and now have 3 times the on-duty strength each and every day keeps fire growth small, better patient outcomes and coverage on throughout the District better. As just one example, multiple apparatus not needing to respond to handle a first aid. Safer for crews as the Company officer can do overall scene safety instead of patient care or managing a fire scene with a nozzle in their hand.

The OSFFJATC is a BOLI approved apprenticeship that is creating labor harmony where common goals were often difficult to complete between management and labor. The apprentice program does not work without labor and management working as equal partners to meet our stated goals. I am pleased to report our journey level fire fighters and management partners are very excited to be part of a groundbreaking program that takes all facets of the Oregon Fire Service to another level.

The Oregon State Fire Fighter Joint Apprentice Committee and our Apprentices are a perfect example of putting ideas, committed professionals, and funding to achieve multiple goals using Oregon's career fire service, community protection and truly representing the very people we serve every day.

Your fire fighters urge a "Yes" on HB 2294 in Committee and on to Ways and Means!

Respectfully Submitted
Karl Koenig
President
Oregon State Fire Fighters Council