

Date: March 21, 2023

To: House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment

Re: Support for HB 2990 Community Resilience Hubs Dear Chair Marsh, Co-Chairs, and Members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment,

My name is Gabriel, and I currently live in Portland Oregon. But in 2021, I had been a long time resident of Southern Oregon. I am writing to you because I believe in and care deeply about community preparation. I support HB 2990 to create a grant program, through the Office of Resilience and Emergency Management, that will go directly to communities to build and implement Community Resilience Hubs and networks. I support Community Resilience Hubs. I hope and believe that after reading my story, you will support them too. The Pandemic: When the pandemic hit, I was living in Southern Oregon, and lucky enough to have a social network. Not every person, disabled or not, has that. I have an over-aggressive immune system. It could kill Covid-19, but in the process, it would kill me too. So, friends and strangers went shopping for me, others brought me eggs from their hens, vegetables from their gardens, and meat from their own farm animals. I can't help thinking of those who died and are dying, simply because they do not have what I have, a connection to the resilience of an involved community. The Alameda Fires: I am unable to drive due to a seizure disorder. When the Alameda fires hit, I already had emergency evac rides set up from long before. Unfortunately, terrifyingly, they were all on the opposite sides of the fire from me. Fortunately, a different friend drove from Grants Pass to evacuate me. Again, there was a connection I was able to rely on. Things could have gone very differently. If the timeline had been different. If the fire hadn't changed course... While I was safe, however, over 2500 structures burned. Something like 1600 of them were residences, and suddenly, previously secure people found themselves unhoused in droves. But, in the fire's wake, the community sprang into action. Starting such a monumental effort from scratch is no easy task. We were baby giraffes: long view, but shaky legs. We weren't the government. No massive budgets on demand. But as members of the community, we had the kind of rapport that best understands local supplies, and local needs. Even many of those who lost everything showed up to give a hand where they could. This is because community is an active interdependence of people. Without interdependence you're not in a community. You're just at an address, surrounded by familiar, but ultimately untested strangers. Community is there for each other before the government arrives, and are still be there for one another once the government-hired contractors pack up and are gone. Violence-prevention, Safety, & Recovery: Resource deprivation increases the chances for crime and related violence, as people in a state of crisis seek to meet their survival needs. When we reduce resource deprivation and uncertainty, when we increase community connection and rapport, we increase trust and support.

And we increase safety and genuine security. With those things addressed, we are not distracted. We can initiate faster recovery during crises. Politics Aside: At the start of a crisis, there is no time to abdicate responsibility. For if we do, lives are lost. My life, or your life. Time is scarce. We can't waste it. When someone is swept away by an overrun river, those forming a chain to reach them don't stop to ask each other's political associations, or consider whether the person swept out is somehow unworthy. Crisis calls to that most human part of us: courageous compassion. When we embrace it, I take your hand, you take mine. Together, we will reach them. And from this shared experience grows a connection that is difficult to erode. Community Prep: There is a kind of security that we can achieve, whether our motivation is self-serving or born from regard for the well-being of others. That security is a natural byproduct of community preparation. If I am prepared but my neighbors are not, I am not secure. No number of guns and locks and cops can grant me a 100% guarantee. If I and all of my neighbors are prepared, and an earthquake shakes your preparations to pieces, you are not surrounded by scarcity. And providing for you from a place of combined abundance would be no burden for the rest of us. Prepared in such a way, collectively, our energies can then be spent rebuilding. And when we have, we get to own that. Or we can scrap the whole idea. Someone can break into your house. Or you can break into mine. We can be enemies and cannibals. We can fight. And material recovery can take our cities 20 years longer. Emotional recovery? If we've even survived, we can all stay afraid and angry, bitter and suspicious. There's no lasting triumphs from under that kind of ash. I know which path I want to take. Community Resilience Hubs offer an extraordinary step towards community preparation. As such, it has my support. I hope it will have yours as well. I urge you to vote Yes on HB 2990 to invest in building stronger communities, and create the resources and connections to make it easier for Oregonians the next time disaster strikes. Stronger communities can make the difference between surviving and thriving. Sincerely, Gabriel Blue Portland, Oregon