

Submitter: John Wheeler

On Behalf Of: Washington County Emergency Management

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public Safety

Measure: HB5017

I am the manager of Washington County Emergency Management (WCEM) and director of the Washington County Emergency Management Cooperative. As with other government functions, all disasters are local. WCEM and our local partners are on the hook to prepare and respond to meet community needs after a disaster. Nonetheless, in nearly every disaster, state-level resource coordination, technical assistance, multiagency coordination, and recovery support is critical to our success.

Our agency and our whole Washington County community depend on ODEM before, during, and after a disaster to mobilize this assistance. In 2021, the legislature directed a reorganization and right-sizing of ODEM, to address historic underfunding and position the state to build resilience and efficiently respond and recover from disasters which are occurring with increasing frequency. We are pleased to see the improvements and expanded services available from ODEM. To build on this success, I encourage the legislature to provide the resources ODEM needs to a) build a reliable and sustainable organization, b) coordinate the statewide modernization of the emergency management function, and c) improve the readiness of the State Emergency Coordination Center.

Thank you!