



Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative

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April 11, 2023

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative
Testimony, Senate Bill 728
Joint Committee on Tax Expenditures

Co-Chair Meek, Co-Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Boquist, Reschke, Walters, and members of the committee,

My name is Tucker Billman and I am the Manager of Government Affairs for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC). OTEC is a member-owned and governed electric cooperative that serves nearly 60,000 residents in Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties in Eastern Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 728. Over the past few years, OTEC has developed strong partnerships with volunteer fire organizations across our service territory. In a world of increasing wildfire severity and devastation, volunteer fire organizations play a critical role in ensuring the safety of rural communities across Oregon. In much of our service territory, volunteer fire organizations serve as the front line of defense between our members and the devastation that often accompanies wildfires. For that reason, OTEC is continuously exploring ways we can serve as a resource to our local volunteer fire organizations to assist in increasing recruitment, expanding their apparatus and facilities, and accessing cutting edge technology to ensure the highest possible safety and success in their efforts to protect our members – hence why we are submitting this written testimony.

While the protection and safety of OTEC's members is of the highest priority to our organization, volunteer firefighters aren't just the front line of defense for OTEC's members. Volunteer firefighters often serve as the first line of defense for federal and state public land and assets.

OTEC has discussed SB 728 with some of our local volunteer fire organization partners. Due to the feedback we received during those conversations, we believe the tax incentive created by this legislation could serve as a great tool to encourage membership in a volunteer fire organization, a desperate need for many of these organizations. OTEC offers our support for SB 728.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of SB 728. Do not hesitate to contact me at tbillman@otec.coop or 541-519-3553.

Sincerely,

Tucker Billman
Manager of Government Affairs
Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative