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Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
ATTN: Chairs Senator Steiner and Representative Sanchez  
900 Court Street NE  
Room H-178  
Salem, Oregon 97301

May 3rd, 2023

Honorable Chairs Senator Steiner and Representative Sanchez, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

We are writing on behalf of Oregon's many Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs) to encourage your support of House Bill 2849. We are not a lobbying organization, we are providing advocacy and coordination pro-bono as we have seen, firsthand, the devastation of Oregon's many wildfires and the essential roles LTRGs play in a community's recovery and resiliency.

After a disaster, there are gaps between what a person's insurance (if they can afford it), FEMA funds, Loans, and other aid will cover and the actual cost to rebuild. This gap is considered the "unmet need," and one of LTRGs' main roles is to ensure these needs are met. They do this by leveraging other resources, employing local Disaster Case Managers, and supporting temporary and permanent housing, mental health and more.

Each community impacted by Oregon's severe 2020 and 2021 wildfires is represented by a locally-led LTRG. LTRGs provide the essential "in-community" work needed to provide safe and sanitary conditions, and to restore individuals and communities to their pre-disaster state.

In a recent survey in just one of these recovery communities, of the approximately 300 individuals still needing support - **11% are unhoused, 48% had their homes destroyed, and almost half say they will not be able to recover without additional assistance.**

Clackamas County LTRG, *"raised and programmed more than 1.5 million dollars in financial aid, in-kind donations and provided Wildfire Survivors with financial gap assistance to procure loans to rebuild."* (Pat Olsen,

*Executive Director, CCLTRG*). The Santiam Canyon LTRG has “*successfully helped approximately 80% of the destroyed homes in less than two years*” (*SC-LTRG Board of Directors*).

Despite these incredible and tangible successes of LTRGs directly affecting thousands of Oregonians, **there is no designated source of public funding for these organizations and the many remaining survivor needs**. Yet, the “cases” that remain (individuals receiving services from the LTRGs) are some of the most complex and challenging to resolve, requiring continued collaboration and support.

Identifying and funding LTRGs is an *integral* part of not only the considerable remaining recovery still needed - with hundreds of individuals still requiring case management, permanent housing, economic recovery, mental health supports, and more - representing the \$18M in survivor support that would be supported by this bill - as well as an additional \$18M to support the staffing and capacity of these organizations which provide a sound investment not only necessary to conduct remaining current recovery efforts impacting hundreds, but also, by default, have been building Oregon’s resiliency as fire season looms and we continue to live in the shadow of a potential Cascadia Subduction earthquake. As *Elib Crist Dwyer, Interim President of the Jackson County Community LTRG* noted, **LTRGs have become the de facto hub of disaster coordination and keeper of collective knowledge**” and *this knowledge is embedded in even the most remote corners of the state, “[sustaining] the recovery efforts, even 2+ years later.”* (*Santiam Canyon LTRG, Board of Directors*).

LTRGs are essential for **full and complete recovery for Oregon’s many wildfire survivors and their communities** (which are all either rural and/or under-resourced or both). Examples of direct support include: repairs to a home or property; access to temporary housing; purchase of food, medicine, or other necessary items; weatherization for residents currently living in recreation vehicles or trailers; propane vouchers for residents currently living in RVs; free firewood (harvested to reduce fire fuel loads); filling insurance gaps; and other needs as evaluated by each LTRG. Without a safe, sanitary, and secure home, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to secure and maintain regular employment and participate in the community.

LTRGs across the state anticipate another 2-6 years of recovery necessary.

HB 2849 fills the current recovery gap while creating a more resilient Oregon. Thank you for considering this incredibly important bill and supporting a resilient future.