



**SENATOR ELIZABETH STEINER
DISTRICT 17**

February 21, 2024

Dear President Rob Wagner and Speaker Dan Rayfield,

In August 2023 Senator Steiner convened the first workgroup meeting to address the scheduled increase in landowner rates following the expiration of the \$15m landowner assessment offset in SB 762 (2021). We have actively engaged in good faith conversations since our first meeting. Our work was led by the following principles:

- We have a very high functioning response system. Maintaining a strong public/private partnership through a complete and coordinated system is a cornerstone of our success.
- Catastrophic wildfire impacts have expanded beyond a natural resource issue; it is of greater urgent social concern, with impacts to public health and safety, community wellbeing, tourism, and our economy that affects all Oregonians. We are looking to establish a more equitable funding system.
- Our funding system is too complicated and needs to be retooled to decomplexify, increase trust in the equity of the system, and ensure buy-in with our Legislature, landowners, and the broader public about who, how, and why we are paying into the system.

It has been clear since the first meeting that the efforts we made in preparation of the 2024 legislative session would be an iterative step to creating a more equitable and decomplexified wildfire funding system. HB 4133 is the product of this first step of this process.

We remain committed to expanding this workgroup and continuing to work on advancing Oregon's wildfire funding structure to include local fire service interests and durable funding solutions for statewide wildfire mitigation and suppression costs. We support a budget note that establishes a convening body of the legislature to direct the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon State Fire Marshal, in collaboration with the Wildfire Programs Advisory Council, to engage with such a workgroup for this purpose.

Thank you,
Senator Elizabeth Steiner and Representative Pam Marsh on behalf of:

Mark Bennett, Wildfire Program Advisory Council Chair
Roger Beyer, Oregon Small Woodlands Association Legislative Policy Director
John Davis, Green Diamond Resource Company Vice President
Brennan Garrelts, Emergency Fire Cost Committee Chair
Justin Jones, The Nature Conservancy Director of Stewardship
Jim Kelly, Board of Forestry Chair
Erik Lease, Weyerhaeuser Director of Silviculture & Regeneration
Les Perkins, Hood River County Commissioner
Tim Vredenburg, Director of Forest Management, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians
Kyle Williams, OFIC Director of Forest Protection
Rick Zenn, Oregon Small Woodlands Association Executive Director