

Date: February 04, 2025

To: House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

Subject: Support for Resilience Hubs and Networks

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Gamba, Vice-Chair Bobby Levy, and Members of the House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment:

My name is Brenda Garcia Mejía, and I live in Salem, Oregon and I am writing because I have noted the needs and impacts that hubs have had on both friends and family members. I support HB 3170 to provide an additional \$10 million in funding for Resilience Hubs and Networks. Extreme weather and wildfires continue to hurt Oregonians, and we must ensure all communities have access to the resources and networks they need to thrive, not just survive.

I support HB 3170 and the continued funding of Resilience Hubs and Networks because in 2020, wildfires impacted many families. During that time of hardship, I witnessed the influence of community support. Without community involvement, I would not be able to imagine how the response would be as quickly or effectively. While shelters, like the one set up at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, provided a place of refuge, the need for even basic necessities was immense. Unfortunately, even with continuous incoming donations from the community, resources were handed out carefully, and though many benefited, there was an evident difference in what was available versus what was required, many being basic needs.

Although not directly impacted, my family and I saw the importance of helping with what we could. Donating and volunteering was our way of helping. As I interacted with others involved in aid and those impacted, I heard how many had left with only the clothes they had on as they prioritized the safety of their children and pets above all. Therefore, receiving food and essentials was comforting, as they did not know where else to go. But even with the immediate relief, calls for more supplies were constant. Exhaustion, stress, and uncertainty were clear on every face, including first responders, which motivated me to remain positive for others. One encounter that stands out to me was when I dropped off donations at a shelter and was approached by a young person, around my age. They thanked me and asked for a moment of my time, explaining that their family had no place to go. I think she really needed someone to talk to. Her parents did not know where to head; relatives lived too far away to travel to. Even hotels were quickly filled, so they explained their family had spent a night in their car until they found out about a shelter that provided free meals. What shocked them was the number of people who had also come to a place to seek help.

It's moments like these that show how beneficial community support is in times of crisis. However, mutual aid itself should not be something we rely on solely in the long term, especially with the lack of funds and resources. Communities need the proper resources

and preparation to respond quickly and effectively to such disasters. **Planning ahead is key.**

So far, Resilience Hubs and Networks has invested \$10 million in locally-driven, community-led efforts to prepare us for disaster. During the last grant cycle, the state received over 700 applications and was only able to fund 69 of them, demonstrating the clear need for continued funding for Resilience Hubs and Networks.

These grants helped communities repair buildings that are emergency shelters, purchase satellite phones, generators, solar generators, water purification systems, and emergency vehicles; and financed staff positions like nurses and outreach staff. These investments will save lives, help first responders, speed recovery, and benefit the communities that are hit first and worst by extreme weather, wildfires, and other natural disasters.

I urge you to support HB 3170 so we can continue building strong Oregon communities.

Sincerely,
Brenda Garcia Mejía
Salem, Oregon