

Submitter: Michael Gerdes
On Behalf Of: West M
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3170

Date: Feb 5, 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 Michael Gerdes, and I live in Corvallis Oregon and I am writing because 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:

I have been affected by wildfire smoke while working as a field researcher and as an arborist. I have lost work hours due to poor air quality. I have also been out in the forest near Oakridge when fire smoke has come and had to evacuate a half mile in the smoke.

During the heat wave 2024 I had a hard time sleeping because of the heat in my unair-conditioned apartment which had a serious affect at work. Multiple times I had to refuse to drive to the job site because I had so little sleep. Most of not all of my peers at work had similar experiences and it was hard to maintain a safe work environment.

I volunteer and spend time at both West M and Luther House campus ministries that are organizing to become resilience hubs. During the Ice storm in early 2024 I was able to have a warm meal and get connected with my community at West M when school was closed. Their work has inspired me to be much more involved in my community and helped me think about how to help when the next wildfire or ice storm hits.

A lot of my fellow classmates and neighbors at Oregon State University have very shallow local networks. We often don't know our neighbors and are disconnected with our families. When disaster strikes, and it is unsafe to be outside we are not able to support each other well and may not have the food storage or the tools to handle what the situation asks of us. Community resiliency hubs help provide resources and build local networks so that we are able to help each other in the worst of times.

I support this funding because I believe that it is our duty to protect our neighbors in times of need, but without resources we are unable to.

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,
Michael Gerdes
Corvallis, Oregon