

February 5, 2025

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

My name is Dawn 'Ilene' Vargas, and I live in Medford, Oregon. I am writing because I work directly with families to understand their unique needs and challenges during natural disasters and in their daily lives. I support HB 3170, which provides an additional \$10 million in funding for Resilience Hubs and Networks. Extreme weather and wildfires continue to harm 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:

- Resilience hubs are centered around the community and provide essential services and resources daily and during natural disasters. Individuals can access support, information, and assistance, leading to better outcomes after experiencing a traumatic emergency and facilitating a better recovery.
- Existing trusted spaces—such as libraries, schools, or local businesses—can be transformed into resilience hubs. These hubs are then equipped with resources like solar-powered battery storage, emergency supplies, and communication tools to support the community during disruptions.

Here in Southern Oregon, we experience extreme weather events and wildfires. Families need safe spaces for temporary shelter during these extreme weather events.

During the 2020 Labor Day Wildfires, thousands of homes were destroyed, and many families were displaced. Our communities struggled to find shelter, resources, and information. Families struggled to find places to store refrigerated milk for their children, medication, and even food after their homes burned or became uninhabitable.

If communities do not have resilience hubs or the financial resources to grow and expand them, they will face potential threats and environmental hazards. They will not have access to vital information and updates regarding the disaster zone. How will families be able to cope with the trauma and stress associated with disasters? There will be a lack of coordination, and recovery efforts will be exacerbated.

Here in Southern Oregon, we know the importance of resilience hubs and the absence of them firsthand due to the 2020 Labor Day wildfire struggles. I support HB 3170 because we have tangible proof of what works and what does not work after experiencing an emergency with long-term recovery efforts.

So far, Resilience Hubs and Networks have 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 finance 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,

Dawn 'Ilene' Vargas

Medford, Oregon