



Oregon
Rural
Electric
Cooperative
Association

February 18, 2025

Chair Hudson
Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick
House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
900 Court Street NW
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 3219 – OHAZ Funding

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee,

My name is Tucker Billman, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association (ORECA). ORECA represents the state's 18 not-for-profit electric cooperatives that serve the geographic majority of the state and 500,000 Oregonians. We are consumer-owned utilities whose governing boards are democratically elected by our customers, who we refer to as member-owners.

I am testifying in support of House Bill 3219, which makes appropriations to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to the Oregon Hazards Lab (OHAZ) at the University of Oregon.

OHAZ plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of Oregonians in the face of natural and human-made hazards, including wildfire. Oregon's electric cooperatives work tirelessly to mitigate wildfire risk to the communities we serve. This work even includes a partnership with OHAZ.

Consumers Power, Incorporated (CPI), based out of Philomath, is an electric cooperative serving parts of the Santiam Canyon and other high fire risk areas in Oregon. Wildfire mitigation is CPI's top priority, and they have partnered with OHAZ to expand OHAZ's wildfire detection and situational awareness systems. This partnership benefits both CPI and OHAZ by ensuring more high fire risk areas in Oregon have high-tech cameras constantly monitoring for new fire starts.

For their part, CPI provides the electrical infrastructure necessary to power the cameras, and OHAZ provides the cameras and allows CPI to access them to monitor for new fire starts around their system. This makes CPI a safer operator in high-risk areas, and ensures new fires are reported sooner.

This partnership displays the creative ways in which Oregon's electric cooperatives are adapting to the real-time risks of wildfire and coordinating with academics, experts, and agencies to do our part to mitigate these risks.

This partnership is also a strong example of why OHAZ's programs, like the wildfire detection and situational awareness systems, are so vital to Oregon's hazard preparedness. We urge your support of HB 3219. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. Should you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at tbillman@oreca.org.

Tucker Billman

Director of Government Relations

Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association