



# OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters  
AFL-CIO CLC

February 20, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Sub Committee on Public Safety  
Co-Chair Broadman  
Co-Chair Evans  
Committee Members

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, Committee Members,

Good morning and for the record, I'm Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council. We represent over 3800 career fire fighters, paramedics, prevention and wildland professionals across Oregon.

We are here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 5538, the 25-27 budget for the Department of State Fire Marshal. The entire fire service watched the presentation yesterday by State Fire Marshal leadership and were very proud of the comprehensive and passionate advocacy for what and how this department is ran and its vision going forward.

With any proposal and presentation, the Oregon State Fire Fighters noticed a few budgetary shortfalls that are worth mentioning. When we speak of adequate staffing it is often confused with budgeted staffing. Two -million short of what was budgeted does not make sense coming off the nearly two million acres burned and the significant drop in structures lost as compared to 2020. Those approximate 1600 fire fighters had a significant impact of the homes NOT lost because of this seasonal staffing. We can also point to Pre-positioning as one more example of innovation and proper use of staffing to put more personnel where the fires will probably happen. We call this practice PrePo and could be one of our greatest practices in keeping small fires small.

We are concerned that any cuts or missed opportunities to keep or exceed staffing needs to makes sense, particularly after 17,000 Federal Fire Fighters were laid off yesterday. We currently have an unknown back up situation going into fire season 2025 and underfunding Staffing Grants is not a great way to start the fire season. The other is Community Risk Reduction. When we think of preventing wildfire and the effects, we advocate the "Community" Portion as the most important. Getting our members out talking to the taxpayers and offering common sense solutions to the fire problem by giving sound advice is so much more effective and solution driven, Oregonians are self-sufficient, but they trust fire to bring sound solutions and this program does exactly that. It needs full funding.

As Chair of the Governors Fire Service Policy Committee, we as a group know our role is to forward sound policy to the Governor's office for consideration. While we are a wide area of interests from Training to Public Safety partners, insurance representatives, labor, volunteers and Chiefs we all realize our greatest advocate is the Department of the State Fire Marshal. They are only capable of so much and particularly if underfunded.

Whether it is HazMat Teams, boots on the ground at the two DSFM Apprentice Sites, prevention and investigation where it doesn't happen unless done by DSFM, Prevention efforts, Community Risk Reduction, Seasonal Up Staffing we need this budget to pass and be enhanced going forward.

We urge this Committee to pass this Bill on to full Ways and Means!

I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today,

Regards

*Karl Koenig*

Karl Koenig

President

Oregon State Fire Fighters Council