



Jackson County FIRE DISTRICT 3



February 19, 2025

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Harbick and Fragala, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Jackson County Fire District 3, I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 3219, which seeks to establish sustained state funding for the Oregon Hazards Lab (OHAZ) at the University of Oregon. As an all-hazards fire district serving 7 unique communities, we recognize the vital role that the Oregon Hazards Lab plays in ensuring the safety and early notification of our residents.

OHAZ is a critical asset to disaster preparedness and response efforts in Southern Oregon and adjacent states. Through its seismic, wildfire, and remote sensing networks, OHAZ provides **real-time, life-saving data** that helps emergency responders and communities mitigate the impact of earthquakes, wildfires, landslides, and other disasters.

Our communities remain on edge from the 2020 wildfires. When there is smoke in the air, the citizens seek immediate information, and responders likely do not have the time or intel to satisfy this hunger early into the incident. When combined with applications like Watch Duty, our communities have access to real-time, accurate information. This information should encourage them to remain aware of changing conditions and take appropriate action.

I think it is easy to articulate the additional value the camera system provides for emergency responders. We can evaluate terrain, topography, the smoke column, and fuel models prior to the arrival of the first unit. This allows for the early activation of key resources. It also allows fire managers to balance system availability as you observe progress being made on the incident.

Investing in OHAZ is a judicious decision. Hazard monitoring and early warning systems save Oregon millions of dollars by reducing disaster response costs, infrastructure damage, and economic disruption. Without sustained state funding to maintain and expand its infrastructure, the long-term viability of these programs is at risk, leaving our communities more vulnerable at a time when proactive resilience planning is more critical than ever.

We urge you to take definitive action by passing House Bill 3219 and securing the future of OHAZ. Doing so will ensure Oregon wisely invests in disaster resilience, protecting lives, property, and the state's economic well-being.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My agency and community appreciate your leadership in advancing policies that safeguard our communities, and we stand ready to support you in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Hussey".

Mike Hussey, Fire Chief

Jackson County Fire District 3 & 5