



LOWELL RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

389 N. Pioneer Street
Lowell, Oregon 97452
541-937-3393

February 12, 2025

House Committee on Higher Education Committee and Workforce Development

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for House Bill 3219 – Sustained State Funding for the Oregon Hazards Lab

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Harbick and Fragala, and Members of the Committee,
On behalf of Lowell Rural Fire Protection District, 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 a rural first response fire agency, we recognize the vital role that the Oregon Hazards Lab plays in ensuring the safety and security of Oregonians in the face of natural and human-made hazards.

OHAZ is a critical asset to disaster preparedness and response efforts in 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.

In particular, the **ShakeAlert Earthquake Early Warning System** can provide crucial seconds of advance notice before severe shaking begins, allowing Oregonians to take protective action. Additionally, **OHAZ's wildfire detection and situational awareness systems** are increasingly vital in an era of escalating fire risk, enhancing rapid response and reducing destruction. These programs are **not theoretical—they are active, operational systems that directly protect lives and property.**

Investing in OHAZ is a smart financial 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 **decisive action** by passing House Bill 3219 and securing the future of OHAZ. Doing so will ensure Oregon remains a leader in disaster resilience, protecting lives, property, and the state's economic well-being.

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

Sincerely,

Lon Dragt, Fire Chief, Lowell Rural Fire Protection District, chief2300@lowellorfire.gov, 541-937-3393

PROUDLY SERVING THE CITIZENS OF THE LOWELL FIRE DISTRICT