



February 20, 2025
Testimony in Support of HB 3243

On behalf of the Lebanon Fire District (LFD), I strongly urge the passage of HB 3243, which would protect patients from balance billing and ensure that ground emergency transport agencies, like LFD, are reimbursed fairly to preserve services to our communities.

Lebanon Fire District: Navigating Challenges While Remaining Committed to Service

The Lebanon Fire District (LFD) has been a cornerstone of public safety in Linn County since its establishment in 1884. Over the years, the district has evolved into a dynamic all-hazards organization, seamlessly integrating career firefighters and dedicated volunteers. With 43 skilled career personnel and 55 committed volunteers, LFD operates five stations—two staffed full-time and three supported by volunteers only. The district covers a 134-square-mile fire protection area serving 30,000 residents and oversees a 419-square-mile ambulance service area that provides emergency medical care to 40,000 people across Lebanon, parts of Scio, Brownsville, and unincorporated areas of Linn County.

Despite LFD's dedication to the community, financial and operational challenges persist. Like many special districts across Oregon, LFD faces a widening gap between revenue and expenses, making it increasingly difficult to maintain services at current levels.

Establishing Local Reimbursement Rates

The LFD, like many EMS providers, do not receive adequate reimbursement to cover the cost associated with providing essential ambulance services to our community. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) delegates the responsibility to each individual county to establish Ambulance Service Areas (ASA). In our case it is Linn County, who provides the authority to the LFD to provide services to portions of Linn County. Ambulance services are funded, as outlined under ORS 682, as a service-based fee. Those using the service pay for the service and is not subsidized with taxpayer ad valorem property taxes.

The LFD establishes our local ambulance rates through a public process and are based on the cost of providing care to our local area. This public process, requiring board adoption, is to cover the actual costs and per board policy does not allow for the district to create fees to generate a profit.

HB 3243 will protect our patients against balance billing and includes protecting their access to critical emergency resources – by ensuring that the prescribed reimbursement rates are appropriate and sufficient.

Commitment to the Community

Despite these challenges, the Lebanon Fire District remains unwavering in its commitment to serving the community. Firefighters, paramedics, and volunteers continue to work tirelessly to provide high-quality emergency response and ensure public safety. While financial constraints present obstacles, LFD is actively pursuing solutions, including advocating for legislative changes, seeking grant opportunities, and exploring operational efficiencies to maintain critical services.



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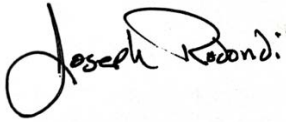
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The district takes immense pride in protecting the lives and property of those it serves. Amidst upcoming challenges, LFD will strive to answer the call, keeping the safety of the Lebanon community as its highest priority

HB 3243 represents a long-overdue investment in ground emergency transport response to all Oregonians. On behalf of the Lebanon Fire District (LFD), I strongly urge the passage of HB 3243, which would protect patients from balance billing and secure essential funding for ground emergency transport agencies, like the LFD, to preserve services to our communities.



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