



To: Members of the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee

From: Chief Brian Stewart
Clackamas Fire District
Oregon Fire Chiefs Association

Chief Ben Stange
Polk County Fire District No. 1
SDAO Fire Districts

Date: February 20, 2025

Re: SB 5538 – Testimony in Support – Department of the State Fire Marshal

Co-Chair Evans, Co-Chair Broadman and Members of the committee,

On behalf of the **Oregon Fire Chiefs Association** and the **Special Districts of Oregon Fire Section**, we are here today to testify in strong support for the Department of the State Fire Marshal budget as envisioned in the Governor’s recommended budget with a request to increase the budget for upstaffing grants to a minimum of \$6 million per year in order to adequately fund this important part of our wildfire response strategy.

We would like to begin by recognizing Chief Ruiz-Temple and her team for demonstrating effective leadership and for prioritizing fire service partnerships to ensure a coordinated, efficient, and effective wildfire response throughout the State of Oregon. The Department plays a critical role in organizing and supporting the fire service through strategic decision-making and the rapid deployment of resources for complex conflagration incidents. Key elements of the budget directly enhance these efforts, including upstaffing grants, wildfire hazard mitigation programs, and essential resources for effective conflagration response. These investments are vital to strengthening our collective ability to protect lives, property, and natural resources across Oregon.

As mentioned previously, we are hopeful that you will increase the appropriation to the Department of State Fire Marshal budget for upstaffing grants to a minimum of \$6 million per year. The upstaffing grants appropriated by the Oregon Legislature play a crucial role in strengthening the state’s wildfire response by ensuring fire departments have the necessary personnel during peak wildfire seasons. These grants provide funding for additional firefighters, equipment, and training, enabling communities to respond more effectively to wildfires and reduce the risk of catastrophic damage. By increasing staffing levels, fire agencies can improve response times, enhance firefighter safety, and better protect homes, businesses, and natural resources. With the growing threat of wildfires, these grants are a vital investment in Oregon’s resilience and public safety. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on SB 5538