

Submitter: Ronald Brown
On Behalf Of: SB579
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB579

Testimony in Support of Infrastructure Project for Umpqua Fire Station

Honorable members of the Oregon Legislature,

I am here today to express my strong support for the proposed infrastructure project to add living quarters to Central Douglas Fire & Rescue's existing unstaffed fire station in Umpqua Oregon. This project would significantly enhance our ability to respond to emergencies, support our fire science and paramedic students, and improve services in a rural area that is currently underserved.

Our community has a large number seniors and the need for responsive and timely emergency services has increased over the years. Combine that need, with the recreational enthusiasts using the logging and forest roads, and the emergency responses have magnified. The Umpqua Fire Station, when manned, will provide emergency services on average of 15 to 20 minutes quicker than currently. In addition, brush fire response in rural areas would be greatly increased.

The Umpqua Fire Station, located in Umpqua, Oregon, was the site of a major conflagration fire in 2023 that was designated as the highest priority fire in the nation for nearly a week. This highlights the urgent need for improved infrastructure in the area. The existing station is currently equipped with apparatus bays and has access to essential utilities, including water, electricity, and propane. However, the addition of living quarters—comprising bedrooms, a kitchen, bathrooms, a laundry facility, a day room, and supply storage—will allow the Fire Authority to staff the station with volunteer and student personnel, dramatically improving our service to the area.

Aside from the emergency response time benefit, the educational and training opportunities are enhanced. Umpqua Community College Fire Science and Paramedic students can be provided with housing while they complete their education, giving them real-life experience in an active fire station environment. Furthermore, it would allow the Douglas Forest Protective Association to stage their wildland crews at the station during fire season, improving coordination and response times in this rural area.

This project is designed with careful attention to durability, usability, sustainability, efficiency, and economy. It is not intended to be a lavish facility, but rather a practical and comfortable station that will enable us to better serve our community. While the

construction of a fire station is never a small undertaking, this is a project that the Fire Authority simply cannot manage without assistance. Central Douglas Fire & Rescue operates on a very tight budget, with little room for discretionary spending outside of our essential day-to-day operations.

Simply by adding living quarters to this unstaffed station, resident volunteers and fire science students can be housed at this location. As stated earlier this would bring numerous benefits to our community, including faster emergency response times, potentially reduced insurance rates for local residents, and enhanced mutual aid with neighboring fire districts. Additionally, having the station staffed would ensure that equipment located at the station is immediately accessible for responding to fires, medical calls, and rescues, without the delay of waiting for off-duty personnel to respond from their homes or the nearest staffed station.

This project will have a lasting impact on the hard-working farmers, ranchers, migrant workers, and visitors who live and work in this rural area. The Fire Authority strives to be a responsible steward of the limited resources we receive and is committed to providing the highest level of service to our community. Completing this project will significantly enhance our ability to serve this underserved area for years to come while providing critical housing and training opportunities for students in the Umpqua Community College Fire Science and Paramedic programs.

I strongly support for SB379.

Ronald Brown