

Brandon Thoms
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March 1, 2025

Leaders of Oregon,

I am writing to express my strong support for Oregon House Bill 2346, which proposes the establishment of the Office of Resilience and Emergency Management within the Department of Human Services. This legislation represents a significant advancement in our state's ability to effectively respond to emergencies and support affected individuals.

By creating the Office of Resilience and Emergency Management, HB 2346 aims to centralize and enhance our emergency management capabilities. This office would be responsible for performing duties outlined in the State of Oregon Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, supporting the continuity of operations within the Department of Human Services, and assisting first responders with evacuations, particularly focusing on vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the bill holds individuals accountable for fires resulting from willful, unlawful, malicious, or negligent actions by making them liable for the actual costs incurred by the Department of Human Services in supporting, relocating, evacuating, sheltering, feeding, hydrating, and delivering other services to those displaced or affected by such fires.

Southern Oregon has firsthand experience with the vital work of OREM, witnessing the critical support it can provide to communities during devastating emergencies. In times when essential services are urgently needed to assist fragile communities and vulnerable populations, OREM has proven to be an indispensable resource. The devastating wildfires and other emergency events in the region have demonstrated the necessity of having a dedicated, well-coordinated response unit to protect and support Oregonians when they need it most.

The establishment of this office is a proactive step toward ensuring that Oregon is better prepared to handle emergencies and can provide timely and effective support to its residents. By consolidating emergency management functions and clarifying responsibilities, HB 2346 will enhance coordination among state agencies, local governments, and community organizations, leading to more efficient and effective responses during critical times.

I strongly encourage the passage of HB 2346 and believe it will significantly contribute to the safety and well-being of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brandon Thoms', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brandon Thoms
Director of Housing and Operations - Habitat for Humanity Rogue Valley
Founding member of Jackson County Community Longterm Recovery Group