



March 5, 2025

Senate Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Prozanski and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 174: Relating to violations of the Insurance Code as unlawful trade practice. The Bend Chamber and Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO) have grave concerns about the impact of this bill on consumers and the insurance industry.

The Bend Chamber serves 1,750 members and 8,500 business in our local community. EDCO is a private, non-profit organization serving the tri-county region of Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties whose mission is to promote sustained job growth and prosperous communities through traded-sector industry growth.

The range of businesses we collectively represent is wide and diverse, however there are some constants that impact all businesses, and insurance rates are one of them. We voiced opposition for similar bills in the 2019, 2021 and 2023 sessions, and we maintain an oppose position and view SB 174 as unnecessary given the current regulatory environment for insurance carriers in Oregon.

We are opposed for the following reasons:

1. Bend and Redmond have recently been named the fourth-best performing small cities in the US – that’s two places up from last year, and the ninth consecutive year Bend/Redmond have made the top 15. But the availability and cost of insurance, for commercial businesses and for homeowners, is becoming a significant problem due to the threat of wildfire.
2. Many insurance companies have reduced their markets in Central Oregon, including choosing not to renew homeowners’ and business policies, or raising premiums dramatically. If you ask residents in Central Oregon what issue most concerns us about our future today, access to affordable insurance is at the top of our list.
3. We look south to California and see companies not writing any new property insurance policies. We look northwest to Portland and hear stories about insurance companies non-renewing policies for small businesses. We look within our own county and know that insurers are not renewing policies, and people who can find insurance are having to pay twice as much or more

or seeking coverage from the state's FAIR plan. We look at what is happening in Washington D.C. with massive cuts to agencies that work to prevent and fight wildfires and wonder how that will impact insurance availability here.

4. Insurance is a business, and we know that the economics of that industry have been struggling for the past five years, with insurers having less access to affordable reinsurance, even while record disasters have resulted in companies paying out more in claims than they are receiving in premiums.

Bottom line is this: passing legislation that expands the ability to file lawsuits takes Oregon in the wrong direction and threatens the economic vitality of our communities. It threatens an already unstable property insurance market, especially in fire-threatened areas of the state like Central Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge no vote on SB 174.

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