



To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction

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

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

Date: March 7, 2025

**Re: SB 5550 – Testimony in Support – Adoption of the Dash 2 Amendment
Rebalance Bill - \$6 Million Upstaffing Grant Appropriation**

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Nosse and Members of the committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Fire Chiefs Association and the Special Districts of Oregon Fire Section, we strongly support the adoption of the Dash 2 amendment to SB 5550, which allocates \$6 million for fire service upstaffing grants in the final year of the current biennium. These grants are a critical component of Oregon’s wildfire season resiliency.

Wildfire seasons in Oregon continue to intensify and last longer, placing immense strain on local fire districts and departments. The funding provided through this appropriation is critical for ensuring local fire agencies across the state have the personnel needed for rapid and effective response to all incident types. By enabling additional staffing, these grants help firefighters contain fires early, keeping them small and preventing their spread into communities where they endanger lives and property. These grant-funded firefighters also provide fire and life safety information to the public and additional response to structure fires, vehicle accidents, medical incidents (including heat-related illnesses), and rescue calls - all of which are exacerbated in the longer, hotter, and dryer season.

Legislative support for upstaffing grants is crucial in bolstering Oregon’s complete and coordinated system for wildfire response. Enhancing local agency staffing improves local response but also adds much needed surge capacity for state conflagrations. Increased staffing levels lead to faster response times, improved firefighter safety, and stronger protection for homes, businesses, and natural landscapes. As wildfires grow more frequent and severe, these grants are a vital investment in Oregon’s resilience and public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on SB 5550.