

Daniel Scotton
Executive Director
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

March 5th, 2025

Testimony supporting House Bill 3172

Chair Lively and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment:

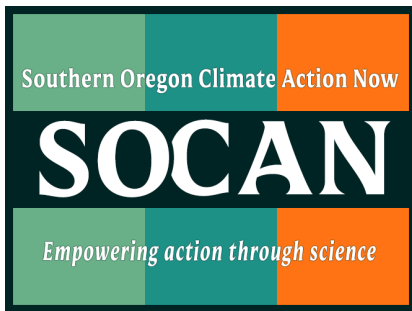
My name is Daniel Scotton and I am writing as Executive Director of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now. SOCAN is a grassroots climate organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians. We are concerned about the climate crisis and seek federal, state and local action to address it.

I am testifying today in support of HB 3172 for the creation of the "Wildfire Prepared Structure Program". If passed, HB 3172 provides a practical and proactive solution to the increasing intensity of Oregon's wildfire seasons.

SOCAN recognizes regions with Mediterranean-like climates experience wet winters and dry summers. These conditions naturally lead to wildfires, and many native plants have evolved to not only survive but even depend on periodic fires. However, climate change is making wildfires more readily burn larger areas by creating hotter, drier conditions that fuel their spread. Rising temperatures, earlier snowmelt, and prolonged drought leave forests and grasslands drier and more vulnerable to fires spreading once ignited. As a result, fire seasons are now longer, and once-manageable wildfires are becoming larger, more destructive, and harder to control.

Jackson and Josephine counties in particular represent a large population of vulnerable community members - low-income families, seniors, and those living in high-risk areas. Local nonprofits have provided a tremendous amount of labor related to educating our communities of the value of fire prevention, however the vulnerable communities they serve often lack the resources to protect their homes and neighborhoods. This disparity in resources is particularly problematic in terms of community fire prevention. An area must reach a critical mass of fire hardened properties, or the weakness of a low-resourced property places the surrounding properties at increased risk [1].

HB 3172 is fiscally responsible. Last year the Oregon legislature approved \$218 million dollars to cover the costs of wildfires across the state in 2024 [2]. According to the National Institute of Building Sciences the cost-benefit ratio for adopting a well managed wildland-urban interface is roughly 4:1, "In other words, for every \$1 invested in WUI code mitigation measures to buildings and properties, \$4 is returned in long-term savings [3]". For every dollar we spend on prevention, we save versus the cost of disaster recovery. This bill is also a real step toward climate action. As we work to address global climate change more broadly, we must protect our communities,



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our neighborhoods, and prevent more environmental damage from the impacts of our climate reality.

I urge you to support HB 3172. This investment in Oregon's resilience will help protect our communities, and our environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Sources Cited:

[1] Restaino, Christina, et al. Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide: How to Harden Homes Against Wildfire. University of Nevada, Reno Extension, 2020,
<https://readyforwildfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/wildfire-home-retrfito-guide-1.26.21.pdf>.

[2] Jensen, Alex. "Oregon Lawmakers Approve \$218 Million to Fund Bill From Record-Breaking Wildfire Season." KGW.com, 12 Dec. 2024,
<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/politics/oregon-special-session-wildfire-season-cost/283-b4f1d16e-3329-4c08-94a1-14ccff4eb0e6>

[3] Mitigation Saves: At the WUI, Complying with the 2015 IWUIC Provides \$4 Benefit for Each \$1 Invested, 2019. National Institute of Building Sciences.
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