



Grants Pass & Josephine County
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Testimony in Support of HB 3666

Presented by Terry Hopkins

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Before the House Committee on Judiciary

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Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Chotzen, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Terry Hopkins, and I serve as the President and CEO of the Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce. We proudly represent over 600 members in Southern Oregon, a region that has been among the hardest hit by catastrophic wildfires. From the devastating Almeda Fire to the countless smaller fires that have threatened lives, homes, and businesses, our communities understand firsthand the urgent need for reasonable wildfire mitigation policies.

Today, I am here to express our Chamber's strong support for HB 3666, a bipartisan measure that will strengthen wildfire safety and accountability in Oregon's utility sector. Our Board of Directors, after careful review and discussion, has voted to endorse this bill because it provides critical safeguards for businesses, homeowners, and the economy while ensuring that utilities are held accountable for wildfire prevention efforts.

Why HB 3666 Matters for Business and Community Resilience

Wildfires are no longer an occasional concern—they are an every-year occurrence. The economic impact of these disasters is staggering. Businesses in our region have suffered not only from direct fire damage but also from power outages, increased insurance costs, and a decline in tourism and commerce due to safety concerns. HB 3666 addresses these risks by requiring investor-owned utilities to obtain a Wildfire Safety Certification, ensuring they are prudently implementing state-approved wildfire mitigation plans.

By requiring audits, verification of safety practices, and transparency in reporting, this bill creates a framework that strengthens wildfire prevention efforts while also providing businesses and ratepayers with greater certainty. It establishes clear, measurable standards for utility preparedness and holds them accountable for their wildfire mitigation investments. At the same time, it allows consumer-owned utilities the option to apply for certification, giving them flexibility while promoting best practices.

Protecting Rural and Small Business Interests

One of the greatest challenges our members face is the rising cost of electricity, driven in part by wildfire mitigation and liability expenses. HB 3666 provides a balanced approach by ensuring that utilities are proactively reducing wildfire risks in a way that is both responsible and cost-effective. It

also offers important legal clarity—confirming that utilities that follow state-approved wildfire safety plans are acting reasonably while maintaining the ability for courts to weigh evidence in any liability case.

This bill does not give utilities a free pass, nor does it absolve them of responsibility. Instead, it incentivizes continuous improvement and a culture of safety. By implementing strong, proactive wildfire mitigation measures, we can reduce the frequency and severity of utility-caused wildfires, ultimately preventing costly disasters that burden businesses and communities alike.

Conclusion

Southern Oregon cannot afford what has become routine & devastating fire seasons like those we have endured in recent years. Our businesses, workforce, and families deserve reliable, affordable power and strong wildfire protections. HB 3666 is a step in the right direction—it promotes accountability, enhances safety, and protects both ratepayers and the broader economy.

On behalf of the Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce, I urge you to pass HB 3666 and ensure that Oregon continues to lead in wildfire resilience and mitigation. Thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions.