

Sheridan Fire District

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March 25, 2025

The Honorable Chair Thuy Tran
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Representative Tran and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans:

I wish to testify in favor of House Bill 3870. We are one of the public safety organizations that would receive funding as the result of the passage of this bill. Over the course of our 139-year existence, we have weathered many storms. We face a current crisis that could drain the life blood from our organization which our community, the surrounding communities, and even Sheridan Federal Correctional Institute rely upon. We appreciate your willingness to offer assistance to our rural fire protection district as well as other organizations throughout the state.

Many things have changed since I joined Sheridan Fire District as a volunteer in February of 1991. Volunteers were the heart of the organization. At that time, we had a fire chief, a clerk, and a part-time EMS Coordinator. Relying on a healthy list of volunteers, we were able to provide fire and emergency medical services – Basic Life Support unless Advanced Life Support was available—24 hours a day with one ambulance crew and sometimes a second medic unit. Our mission statement emphasized a “a wise and frugal use of resources.”

Today we have few volunteers while the demand for service and the cost of operations continue to increase and ambulance revenue—what insurance companies and Medicare/Medicaid will pay for patient transports—continues to drop. We have weathered a costly seismic upgrade, a failed merger attempt, a COVID crisis, and the need to upgrade vehicles suffering from deferred maintenance. With fewer businesses and no timber dollars and a federal prison that does not pay taxes, we rely heavily upon our property owners. In this area 64% of houses are owner occupied, and the median household income is \$69,375. How much can we increase our serial levy without impacting the very people who have voted in our support? One of our hopes—our dreams—is to encourage high school students to pursue careers in fire and EMS through our partnership with the Sheridan School District in the development of the Barbara Roberts CTEC. Big dreams come with big price tags. How far can we stretch the budget without breaking?

We are not alone. I look at the list of other organizations included in this bill and see their dream for a glimmer of light in the midst of fiscal bleakness. From the Rogue Siskiyou Regional Training Facility in Gold Beach to the Grant County Sheriff's Office, and from the City of Mosier to the City of Talent, we are united in the desire to help others. But we cannot move forward in making those dreams become a reality without your help.

We appreciate your support. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Marguerite Alexander, Administrative Assistant

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