

Submitter: Denice Searcy

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3944

YES on HB 3944

OPOA worked closely with legislators in both the Oregon House and Oregon Senate in preparing this bill and ensuring that the bill repealed both the map and the state regulations that have caused so much chaos and confusion since they were first approved in 2021. In addition, the bill declares null and void any hazard or WUI designation imposed upon property because of either the 2022 or 2025 maps.

I support this bill because HB 3944 is a practical, no-nonsense response to the wildfire management challenges Oregon has faced in recent years. The bill repeals the most flawed and overreaching aspects of SB 762—such as the disastrous wildfire hazard maps and burdensome state regulations—while preserving the programs that genuinely protect property owners and reduce wildfire risks.

By emphasizing local control, HB 3944 returns power to the communities most affected by wildfire policies, empowering them to make decisions that reflect their unique needs and circumstances. At the same time, it ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent where they matter most, supporting voluntary efforts to improve defensible space, promote forest thinning, and enhance wildfire readiness in rural Oregon.

HB 3944 Summary:

- Eliminates the state wildfire map;
- Eliminates OSFM's authority to impose defensible space regulations;
- Eliminates DCBS authority to mandate home hardening requirements for new homes;
- Allows OSFM to create a defensible space model code, with limitations, which local governments can choose to adopt, or choose to ignore;
- Restores local government's ability to regulate defensible space and home hardening, with limits, which was Oregon law prior to the passage of SB 762;
- Keeps OSFM's community risk reduction program and ODF's landscape resiliency programs, which have been used by the agencies to obtain federal and state funds to greatly enhance wildfire protection in Oregon, create grant programs allowing property owners to obtain state assistance to create their own voluntary defensible space or home hardening, put out wildfires before they become conflagrations, promote forest thinning and proscribed burns in areas near the WUI, and provide much needed firefighting equipment in rural Oregon;
- Eliminates all final orders designating hazard designations issued by ODF in

January.

- HB 3944 does not repeal all of SB 762. As we've written before, a full repeal isn't likely since the legislature and Governor wouldn't support it. That is because there are parts of SB 762 that benefit property owners such as utility wildfire mitigation plans, support for prescribed burns and emergency shelters, the Oregon Conservation Corps program for youth wildfire risk reduction work, grants for small woodland owners, and resources like automated wildfire detection cameras that allow for faster wildfire detection and response.
- HB 3944 does not eliminate the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Instead, it restores a clear, older definition used for 25 years before SB 762. HB 3944 makes the WUI only about funding projects like defensible space and wildfire mitigation—not about regulations. Local governments remain free to create their own WUI definitions or maps. This was the authority they had prior to SB 762.
- HB 3944 doesn't cut critical federal funding opportunities. Having a WUI definition qualifies Oregon for federal wildfire funds, ensuring resources go to areas with the biggest impact, like where homes and wildlands meet. HB 3944 ensures taxpayer money is spent wisely to reduce wildfire risks without creating new state regulations tied to the WUI.

Please support this bipartisan effort to restore civil jurisdiction back to THE PEOPLE.