

Submitter: Dawn Watson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3149

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson & McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dawn Watson, and I proudly serve on the Phoenix-Talent School Board. I am writing today in strong support of HB 3149, which extends critical funding to wildfire-impacted school districts like ours for an additional year. First, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the support and funds that have already been provided. This assistance has been absolutely essential in helping us navigate the aftermath of the 2020 Almeda Fire, and we are deeply thankful for it.

The Almeda Fire devastated our community—destroying entire neighborhoods, displacing families, and impacting hundreds of students across our district. Five years have passed since that tragedy, and sadly, that time has not been enough for us to fully recover. Due to persistent delays in rebuilding housing and red tape surrounding recovery dollars, our schools have faced the challenge of unstable enrollment, with students moving in and out of temporary shelters, hotel rooms, and staying with relatives. Incredibly, it was only in December 2024—more than four years after the fire—that the first family in our district gained access to the millions of dollars set aside for housing recovery.

During this time, our educators have stepped up in heroic ways, many of whom also lost their own homes. They've provided emotional support, one-on-one academic remediation, and stood by students who are still coping with loss. The support we've received so far has been vital, but the road to recovery remains long. HB 3149 would ensure that this critical assistance continues, and an additional year of funding would make a tremendous difference for our schools and community.

Please support HB 3149 and stand with the Phoenix & Talent communities as we continue to rebuild and heal. Thank you again for all you've done—we couldn't have come this far without you.

Respectfully,

Dawn Watson
Phoenix-Talent School Board Member