

Submitter: Sara Crawford
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3149

March 28, 2025

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

My name is Sara Crawford, and I serve on the Phoenix-Talent School Board. I write today in strong and hopeful support of House Bill 3149, which will allow an additional year of financial support to the three districts still recovering from the catastrophic wildfires in 2020.

Four and a half years ago, the Almeda Fire tore through our school district communities. It was one of the most destructive wildfires in Oregon history. Over 2,600 homes were lost, and the majority of those were home to our families. The loss of housing forced families into motels, shelters, RV parks, or out of the region entirely. Many students left our schools not by choice, but by displacement.

The financial support for fire-impacted districts from HB 2630 in 2021 was a lifeline to our district. Our district has continued to support every student to the best of our ability—but that effort takes sustained resources. HB 3149 recognizes that recovery doesn't fit neatly within a biennium budget window and provides resources through the 2025-2026 school year.

While millions of dollars were allocated for rebuilding, the process has been agonizingly slow. The family didn't receive assistance until December 2024. This instability resulted in significant enrollment fluctuations, which created major challenges in planning and staffing. Students who stayed often faced trauma, grief, and anxiety. We saw increased behavioral issues, higher absenteeism, and a greater need for counseling and academic support.

HB 3149 is needed to ensure that disaster-impacted students receive the academic interventions they need to recover, rebuild, and thrive. These children have already lost their homes—let's make sure they don't lose their futures, too.

Sincerely,
Sara Crawford
Phoenix-Talent School Board Member