

Submitter: Rachel Freed  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3917

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 3917, which proposes the creation of a Catastrophic Wildfire Fund to cover property damage claims resulting from catastrophic wildfires ignited by public utility facilities. While the intent of this legislation may be to provide relief for affected property owners, it raises significant concerns regarding accountability, financial responsibility, and long-term solutions to wildfire prevention.

First and foremost, this fund could inadvertently relieve public utilities of their responsibility to maintain and operate their facilities safely. By creating a safety net for utilities, we risk sending a message that they can operate with less diligence, knowing that taxpayers will ultimately bear the financial burden of their negligence. This could lead to complacency in infrastructure maintenance and wildfire prevention efforts, exacerbating the very risks we seek to mitigate.

Moreover, funding such a program could place an undue financial strain on taxpayers. The costs associated with catastrophic wildfires are already substantial, and diverting public funds to cover utility-related claims may detract from essential services and programs that benefit our communities. This approach raises questions about fairness and the allocation of resources, particularly for those who do not directly benefit from the fund.

Additionally, HB 3917 does not adequately address the root causes of wildfires or promote proactive measures to prevent them. Instead of establishing a fund that merely responds to the aftermath of wildfires, we should focus on comprehensive strategies that prioritize fire prevention, land management, and community resilience. Investing in proactive measures can save lives, protect property, and reduce the overall costs associated with wildfire damage.

In conclusion, while the intention behind HB 3917 may be to provide a safety net for wildfire victims, the potential consequences of creating such a fund could be detrimental to both accountability and public finances. I urge you to oppose this legislation and consider alternative approaches that emphasize prevention and responsibility.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.