

Benton County Sheriff's Office

Scott Jackson, Sheriff

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RE: Written Testimony for Oregon Department of Emergency Management (SB5517)

Dear Joint Ways and Means Committee,

April 7, 2025

It is with great pleasure that I submit written testimony for SB5517 regarding the budget for the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM). My name is Bryan Lee, and I am the Emergency Manager for Benton County. Over my last seven years here in Oregon, I have seen a rapid expansion in OEM as they continue to grow and improve their systems and structure to provide support to the local jurisdictions.

Oregon Department of Emergency Management provides a variety of support across the state including grant management and administration, training, exercises, and planning help to ensure Oregonians are prepared for major emergencies. Additionally, OEM provides support and resource coordination during response to ensure local jurisdictions are able to leverage state resources and mobilize partner state agencies to solve critical problems during emergencies. Furthermore, OEM heavily supports mitigation and recovery efforts across Oregon by coordinating with emergency managers to conduct damage assessment and information sharing. This allows local jurisdictions to access critical grant funds and Public Assistance programs through FEMA that without, would often lead to financial ruin in many communities.

As OEM continues to grow and mature as a department, it is also clear they will play an important role as an advocate and support as Federal grants and emergency response/recovery systems begin to change. With the negative impact of Federal administration changes, this will require an "all-hands on deck" approach to support and management of emergencies across the state to build resilience at all levels of government and society. It is clear that with these changes, rural communities and more vulnerable communities will be impacted significantly. Ensure the state Emergency Management program is adequately funding will be crucial to ensure the mission of preparedness and resilience may continue forward. Often during budget considerations, Emergency Management as a profession is neglected and response organizations are prioritized. The result is a disproportionate impact to budgets as the overall resiliency and success of a community following disasters are how preparedness and recovery are managed. OEM provides support throughout these phases and now regularly works with locals to gain input and provide customer service.

It is for these reasons, that I support the initiative to expand and continue funding the Oregon Department of Emergency Management into the next fiscal years. As this and other bills move forward, it is crucial for the future of Oregon that we find ways to also fund local emergency management programs that are not dependent on federal funding. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thank you,

Bryan Lee
Emergency Manager
Benton County, Oregon

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