

Date:	April 9, 2025
To:	Co-Chairs Evans and Broadman, Members of the Public Safety Subcommittee
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager Tim Dooley
Subject:	Support – HB 5517

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 5517, the Oregon Department of Emergency Management’s (OEM) budget bill. For the record, I am Tim Dooley, testifying on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), representing Oregon’s county governments.

Counties are in strong support of OEM’s budget bill. OEM is a consistent and valued partner for county emergency managers and their statewide focus allows county staff to work locally on the entire emergency management cycle from mitigation and preparedness to response and recovery. OEM’s facilitation of grants, training, and planning makes what could have been an unwieldy state-local program patchwork into a cohesive whole.

Crucially, the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), funds about half the cost of a county’s emergency manager. These funds are vital to a county’s ability to continue its emergency management program, especially in a budget climate where the majority of counties are facing deficits. Counties, through their Sheriff’s Offices, also manage the search and rescue (SAR) programs and are grateful for OEM’s role in coordination for this program.

Oregon’s emergency management system functions well because OEM functions well. We urge the Legislature to fully fund OEM’s small general fund budget. There is substantial uncertainty around future Federal funding for emergency management and disaster response and recovery. A loss of this funding would be devastating, and counties cannot absorb costs for these programs. Thoughtful state investment would be required to backfill a loss of Federal funds to ensure continuity of operations. For example, the EMPG program alone funds counties, major cities, and tribal programs at \$3.8 million per year in Federal pass-through dollars. That is a baseline just to keep people in positions.

Disasters start at the local level, met by local officials in their communities. We need to support them in this vital work through OEM’s budget and leadership. Thank you to the committee for your time and attention on this subject area.