



## COMMISSIONER HEATHER BUCH, District 5, East Lane

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PUBLIC SERVICE BUILDING / 125 EAST 8<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE / EUGENE, OR 97401

April 9, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

RE: HB 5517; Relating to Financial Administration of the OR Department of Emergency Management

Dear Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Heather Buch, and I serve as a Lane County Commissioner. I write in support of HB 5517, the primary budget legislation for Oregon Emergency Management. Lane County has faced repeated federally declared disasters in recent years—from wildfires and ice storms to flooding and extreme weather—and we know all too well the critical importance of strong emergency management infrastructure.

This proposed budget continues support for essential programs that enable local governments like Lane County to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

**Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG):**

EMPG matching funds directly support the personnel who do the day-to-day work of preparedness, planning, and coordination. These grants ensure that we can maintain staffing levels that are adequate to serve our communities, especially rural and vulnerable populations.

**State Homeland Security Grant (SHSG):**

SHSG funds are vital for acquiring the planning tools, training, and equipment that help us conduct foundational preparedness activities. These investments are what allow counties like Lane to be ready before disaster strikes.

**Public and Individual Assistance Programs:**

During and after disaster events, Lane County relies on federal programs like Public Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA). These programs help us offset massive local costs and support recovery for individuals and families. Without these tools, the burden on our communities would be immense and unsustainable.

**SPIRE Grant Program:**

The State Preparedness and Incident Response Equipment (SPIRE) grant provides critical tools for building disaster response capability. In Lane County, we've seen first-hand how access to properly equipped emergency response tools can save lives and protect property.

**Statewide Software Systems and OR-ALERT:**

OEM's role in maintaining centralized software administration is a model of efficiency. Systems like OR-ALERT, have proven invaluable in delivering timely, consistent emergency notifications. Standardization across jurisdictions saves taxpayer dollars and ensures we are communicating clearly during a crisis. This kind of central, shared infrastructure is exactly the kind of smart investment the state should continue supporting, while ensuring local voices are at the table in shaping how these tools are used.

**Hazard Mitigation and Recovery Programs:**

Hazard mitigation and recovery resources are a necessity in Lane County. The growing frequency and intensity of disasters mean we need continued investment in building resilience, reducing risk, and

ensuring rapid recovery. The programs funded in this budget are our frontline defense against recurring devastation.

**Statewide Preparedness and Coordination Role of OEM:**

OEM's preparedness and response coordination benefit every jurisdiction. OEM is legally required to assist during disaster response—and they do this incredibly well. Just as importantly, their work in preparedness helps fill the gap for local emergency management offices that are under-resourced or stretched thin. This is a smart, cost-effective way to elevate our statewide disaster readiness.

**State 9-1-1 System and Search and Rescue (SAR):**

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of the statewide 9-1-1 system and Search and Rescue (SAR) services. Our central dispatch and SAR teams are indispensable during emergencies. These programs, though not always linked directly to county emergency management, are deeply integrated in our response network and must continue to be prioritized.

HB 5517 is a blueprint for public safety and community resilience. I urge you to fully fund the Oregon Department of Emergency Management's 2025-2027 budget as proposed.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Oregon's emergency readiness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Heather Buch", written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Heather Buch  
East Lane County Commissioner