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House Revenue Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support House Bill 3940 – Wildfire Funding

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Reschke, Vice Chair Walters and Members of the Committee:

As the President of the Coos Forest Protective Association, I'd like to inform you of our concerns regarding Oregon's current wildfire funding model and encourage you to support HB3940. Oregon's current funding system is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of today's wildfire crisis, and needs to change to ensure that the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the three operating Forest Protective Associations (FPA) can continue to provide an adequate level of protection and maintain Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system.

Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system is the premier firefighting system in the United States. This public/private partnership relies on costs being allocated fairly to those who benefit from the complete and coordinated system. This is accomplished by each operating and non-operating FPA analyzing performance, capacity, and determining an adequate level of protection for their respective districts, then approving a fiscal budget that supports that level of fire protection.

The intent behind the laws in ORS Chapter 477 that govern these processes was for landowners to pay for adequate protection at the local level. The intent was never for ratepayers to provide an adequate level of funding for ODF's administrative functions at the Salem or Area level, costs which ballooned two years ago with the passage of SB762 and again this year by another 40%. There is no other example in Oregon's system where state agencies pass along their administrative costs to ratepayers. It is these costs that are contributing to the financial burden put on landowners at a pace that far exceeds a landowner's ability to recoup costs from those lands. HB3940 would remove these costs from district budgets as well as redirect other landowner dollars to district budgets. This will provide some rate relief and bring the system more into alignment with the original intent of the forest laws.

Oregon's current funding model was created during a time when the threat and impacts of fire were mainly limited to forest landowners directly, and the cause of large, costly fires was frequently caused by forest operations. Forest operation-related ignitions over the last several

decades have been drastically reduced with newer technology. There were zero fires caused by forest operations during the 2023 and 2024 fire seasons on the CFPA district. Currently, the leading causes of fire ignitions on the Coos Forest Protective Association (CFPA) protected lands are directly related to the general public.

While fire ignitions from landowner activities have been decreasing, fires resulting from public and natural ignitions have been wreaking devastation on a scale not seen since the formation of organized firefighting systems. Last year alone, over 1.9 million acres burned across all jurisdictions in Oregon, a record that has been broken multiple times over the last 10 years. Over the last decade, we've seen fires that have turned cities into ashes and threatened major metropolitan areas. Fires have sent unhealthy air to every corner of the state and threatened the watersheds that provide clean water for our cities and communities. These fires have had a significant impact on wildlife, recreation, and tourism, and have threatened what Oregon is known for: our forests. It is truly an all-Oregonian problem. HB3940 provides funding options to make paying for large fires an all-Oregonian solution, and provides a fund to ensure ODF and the FPAs have enough money available to pay their contractors for the work they do on these large incidents.

The Coos Forest Protective Association has been providing fire protection in Oregon since 1910. We have a passion for protecting Oregon's forests and communities, and that is why we are encouraging your support of HB3940.

Respectfully,



Tim Truax
President, Board of Directors
Coos Forest Protective Association