

*Chair Meek, Vice-Chair McLane, and Members of the Committee,*

*For the record, my name is Suzanne Weber, and I am honored to serve as the State Senator for Senate District 16, which includes Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia and rural portions of Washington and Multnomah Counties.*

*I am here today to express my strong support for Senate Bill 454 -2.*

*This bill establishes a task force that represents a meaningful step forward in ensuring that Rural Fire Protection Districts (RFPDs) have the tools and resources they need to provide essential services to their communities.*

*We rely heavily on our fire agencies and EMS professionals to protect public safety—and we must provide them with adequate support to fulfil that mission.*

*Across Oregon, there are 301 fire agencies, of which approximately 242 are Rural Fire Protection Districts. These agencies often operate with extremely limited funding (This information is provided by the districts when they renew their insurance with Special Districts Insurance Services):*

- *36% have annual budgets under \$200,000*
- *56% have budgets under \$500,000*

*SB 454 -2 establishes a straightforward, focused task force—in partnership with the State Fire Marshal's Office—to guide future legislative work. It will examine:*

- *The range of services currently provided by RFPDs*
- *Existing and potential funding mechanisms*
- *The financial limitations that affect their operations*

*Our goal with this task force is to gather comprehensive, actionable information that can lead to better, smarter solutions for RFPDs—strengthening our fire service statewide.*

*I respectfully urge you to join me in supporting SB 454 -2 and standing with our rural fire professionals and public safety providers.*

*Thank you for your consideration!*