

Submitter: Suzanne Weber  
On Behalf Of: Senate District 16  
Committee: House Committee On Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB454  
Chair Nathanson:  
Vice-chair Reschke:  
Vice-chair Walters:  
Members of the Committee:

It is my pleasure to write to you today in full support of SB 454-A

SB 454-A requires the state fire marshal to create an advisory committee on funding options and deficiencies for rural fire departments, and deliver a report to the legislature by the end of 2026, which will give this body an opportunity to act on its recommendations during the 2027 long session.

The vast majority of rural fire departments are funded by property taxes. In communities like the coast, that means the amount of resources do not increase, even if the visitor population dramatically does. For example, just a few weeks ago the population of the City of Astoria doubled as visitors flooded the city to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the release of the movie "The Goonies". What did not double were the budgets of the first responders like rural fire departments that had to provide services to twice as many people as normal. It is not sustainable to have the population of a service district increase by 50, 70, or even 100% on a regular basis while the budget to protect that population goes up 0%.

SB454-A does not impose any additional taxes or fees. It simply convenes a group of knowledgeable Oregonians who can make recommendations as to how to ensure that our rural fire districts are properly funded, examine whether or not the current mechanisms are the right ones to fund the departments, and what additional data is needed.

This is a first step in ensuring our rural fire departments stay operational and effective going into the future. I strongly encourage the House Committee on Revenue to advance SB 454-A to the House floor as quickly as possible.

Regards,

Sen. Suzanne Weber  
Senator District 16