

The Honorable Representative Nathanson,  
House Committee on Revenue  
18 June 2025  
Re: Support of HB 3940

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Brennan Garrelts, and I am here today on behalf of the Oregon Department of Forestry's Emergency Fire Cost Committee (EFCC) to express our unwavering support for House Bill 3940. The EFCC is an active member of the Fire-35 workgroup.

The EFCC has been a cornerstone of this state's wildfire public-private partnership for decades and has been the fiduciary of hundreds of millions of dollars that have paid for state wildfire suppression and initial attack. Our committee represents all rural landowners, both large and small, ensuring that their diverse interests and concerns are heard by state and federal partners.

As you well know, wildfires are an all-Oregonian crisis that is escalating at an alarming rate. Fire seasons are starting earlier, lasting longer, and becoming more costly. The current Rowena Fire is a stark reminder of this trend, wreaking havoc on rural communities and landowners.

That said, Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system is nationally recognized as a foremost firefighting system in the United States. The people who make up this firefighting force are a further embodiment of the public-private partnership and include private citizens, private businesses, landowners, and state and federal agencies.

However, as evidenced last year when private firefighters and businesses were held without payment for their services for several weeks, these brave firefighters are working under a broken financial system that only the legislature has the power to fix.

The evidence is clear, Oregon has- and continues- to fall behind the wildfire threat. Our mitigation and suppression funding is grossly inadequate and the devastating REAL costs are being borne by Oregon's rural landowners, communities, and the brave citizens who put their lives and businesses on the line to stop the fire. It is imperative that you act now.

**Passage is Critical:** HB 3940-A is a comprehensive all-Oregonian solution that provides critical fixes to our financially broken system. It continues to recognize the important financial partnership that landowners pay into the system while adding vital all-Oregonian revenue sources to meet the growing mitigation and suppression funding needs.

**Risks of Not Passing HB 3940:** The consequences of not passing HB 3940 are dire. Without the necessary funding and resources, our ability to suppress wildfires will continue to be severely compromised. This will lead to more frequent and intense wildfires, causing even greater damage to rural communities, landowners, and the ecosystem services – like clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Additionally, the financial burden on state and local governments will escalate, making it even more challenging to address the wildfire crisis. The solvency of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) will continue to be jeopardized, hindering its ability to perform other critical statutory duties if it expends all of its cash suppressing fires.

House Bill 3940 is a pivotal step in providing the necessary financial resources to combat wildfires effectively. It is imperative that we support this bill to ensure that our communities are protected and that we can mitigate the devastating impacts of wildfires. I urge the committee and their respective caucuses to recognize the urgency of this issue and to act swiftly in passing HB 3940.

In conclusion, wildfires are not just a problem for rural areas; they are an all-Oregonian crisis. We must unite to confront this challenge and support House Bill 3940.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brennan Garrelts  
Chair of ODF's Emergency Fire Cost Committee