

February 13, 2026

Heather Friend
Rogue River, Oregon 97537

Dear Co-Chairs Nosse and Girod, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Heather Friend. I am a family nurse practitioner, owner of a primary care clinic in Rogue River, and Vice Chair of Evans Valley Fire District #6. I recognize the weight of the decisions before you and appreciate your careful stewardship of limited state resources. I write in strong support of the District's request for \$2.2 million in Capital Construction funding to complete the Evans Valley Community Resource Center.

Evans Valley, known locally as Wimer, is a rural, unincorporated, high wildfire-risk community in northwest Jackson County with approximately 4,500 residents. We have no city government and no county service facilities. The fire district is the only public institution present in our valley.

Our community is highly vulnerable. Approximately 46% of residents are over age 65 with more than 30% of all residents living below the poverty level. Many live on fixed incomes and have limited ability to relocate or travel during emergencies.

Last year alone, the community experienced 46 power outages totaling approximately 272 hours without electricity. When power is lost there is no water. Residents who depend on oxygen, CPAP machines, refrigerated medications, or other medical equipment are immediately at risk. At times, cell service is also unreliable, further isolating the valley.

When these events occur, there is nowhere for residents to go except the fire station. However, it was never designed to function as an ADA-accessible facility, disaster coordination hub, evacuation site, or cooling or warming center.

In a community where nearly half of residents are seniors, the absence of ADA-compliant public space restricts access for those most likely to need assistance. Equal access to public safety infrastructure should not depend on geography. Rural residents deserve the same level of accessibility and protection as those in incorporated communities.

This is a fundamental infrastructure gap. The District has already secured \$1,799,400 in state seismic funding. The requested \$2.2 million completes a coordinated project and maximizes prior state investment. The project is shovel-ready. The design is complete. Local commitment is strong. This is not an enhancement. It is essential public safety infrastructure for an isolated and vulnerable rural community.

I respectfully ask for your support. Thank you for your service to Oregon.

In health,
Dr. Heather M. Friend, DNP, FNP-C
Vice Chair Evans Valley Fire District #6
Rogue River, Oregon

