

Submitter: Devon Lawson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1531

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Devon Lawson. I am testifying today in support of SB 1531.

I support this bill because it acknowledges a fundamental truth. The current market-based model for Emergency Medical Services is failing Oregonians, both urban workers and rural residents.

In a profit-driven system, ambulances go where the density is high and the insurance payouts are rich. This leaves rural Oregon behind. The "market" will never solve the problem of rural EMS because there is no profit in driving 45 minutes for one patient. SB 1531 proposes a model based on "State funding," but explicitly mandates "Delegated local control." This is the model rural Oregon needs. State resources to cover the high cost of service, but the local authority decides how those services are deployed. Do not let the word "Universal" scare you; in this context, it simply means "guaranteed coverage" for your constituents who are currently being ignored by the market.

As a society, we have decided that when a house is on fire, the fire department comes, and we don't send a bill. Yet when a human body is in crisis, we send a bill that can ruin a family. This creates a "rationing of care" based on class. People hesitate to call 911 because they fear the cost. This study is the first step toward treating pre-hospital care as a public good rather than a luxury commodity.

While I support the study, I must flag a concern with Section 1(1)(a), which calls for a "mix of public and private resources". I urge the committee to ensure this study does not simply become a blueprint for subsidizing private profits with public tax dollars. The goal must be a system that works for patients, not shareholders.

We cannot rely on the "invisible hand" to drive an ambulance. We need a system guaranteed by the state and accountable to the people. SB 1531 asks the right questions.

I urge you to vote Yes.

Thank you.