

April 8, 2019

Representative Paul Evans
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Evans and Members of the Committee:

The Portland metropolitan region emergency managers are writing in support of HB 2730, which would establish the Oregon Department of Emergency Management as a standalone agency separate from the Oregon Military Department. Natural hazards pose a dire risk for our region and the state. Well-developed policies and interagency coordination can reduce disaster risk, mitigate impacts before and after disasters, and more effectively respond to community needs after a disaster. The emergency management field is rapidly evolving. Emergency managers are now required to advise elected leaders about resilience policies, coordinate professionally across a wide array of agencies and subject matters, and build consensus through clear and comprehensive communication strategies. It is time for emergency management in Oregon to be elevated to a "Cabinet" level and ensure the Emergency Management Director has direct access to the governor to advise on these issues.

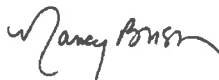
Our region and the state face many natural and human-caused hazards, including, but not limited to, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, winter weather, landslides, volcanic eruptions, explosive devices, hazardous chemicals, radiological releases, and terrorist attacks. Our region relies heavily on the State of Oregon to have a robust, competent, and comprehensive emergency management system. That system must have well-developed and effective plans and the ability to prioritize incidents and allocate scarce resources across all impacted counties. This requires robust interagency coordination at the State level. Keeping the Office of Emergency Management within the Military Department impedes development of the system and makes it easier for State agencies to think of emergency management as a "military issue" rather than as a critical component of their own agency's success.

We respectfully urge the Committee to establish the Oregon Department of Emergency Management as a standalone agency with direct access as the Governor's emergency management advisor.

Sincerely,



Courtney Patterson
Interim Director
Portland Bureau of
Emergency Management



Nancy Bush
Director
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Steve Pegram
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