



1284 Court St NE | Salem, OR 97301
1-800-223-9708 | 503-378-0896 | Fax: 503-364-9919

**Statement in Opposition:
HB 2980
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
February 2, 2023**

The Oregon Fire District Directors Association (OFDDA), formed in 1950, serves the elected public officials of over 250 Fire Protection Districts throughout Oregon, all Special Districts formed under ORS Chapter 478. The five-member governing boards, who serve without compensation, are responsible for the financial and management oversight of the Districts.

The OFDDA supports the concept of affordable housing for all of Oregon's citizens. We understand that housing is fundamental to education of our children, reduction in crime, and the health and safety of all Oregonians.

However, HB 2980 proposes to create additional housing by reducing the revenues of our fire districts, whose only support is property taxes. Creating more housing, which requires more resources for fire protection, and then reducing the very resources for that protection, is not a responsible decision.

If the legislature is serious about housing affordability, it should give fire districts more resources, not less. OFDDA submits that it is far more cost effective to preserve the housing inventories we have, rather than lose them to fire and bear the cost of having to replace them.

Last year, I had the opportunity to visit with a number of fire districts across the state to assess their needs. I found one district that was paying only one dollar in rent for its fire station because the building was so dilapidated, including a roof that constantly leaked. Another told me they were saving for a washer and dryer so their firefighters would not have to take their toxic turnouts home to be washed in their family's machines. Others told me they continue to hold bake sales and other events in order to be able to afford turnouts and other equipment for their firefighters. This should not be happening anywhere in our State.

Currently, a number of fire districts throughout the state are preparing to ask their electorate for five-year levy initiatives just to be able to keep up with costs. These are costs that property taxes do not sufficiently cover under our current system. This is not the time to further deplete resources.

On behalf of the Oregon Fire District Directors Association, we respectfully ask that HB 2980 be amended to hold harmless the fire districts that work so hard to fight to preserve our housing inventories.