



OFFICE OF REPRESENTATIVE DACIA GRAYBER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5th, 2024

Press Contact:

Barrett Johnson, Chief of Staff

Rep.DaciaGrayber@OregonLegislature.gov

Legislature passes historic bill modernizing Oregon Emergency Medical System

The EMS Modernization Act of 2024 builds on policy 20 years in the making

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon State Legislature passed the EMS Modernization Act of 2024 ([HB 4081](#)), a policy framework more than twenty years in the making, that begins to address inefficiencies in Oregon’s emergency medical system after years of ranking near the bottom in national surveys.

“The efficiency with which we respond to time-sensitive emergencies determines whether or not a life is saved, and unfortunately our current system has too many unnecessary obstacles in our path,” says **Rep. Dacia Grayber (D - SW Portland)**, chief sponsor and firefighter who knows the difference a good emergency management system makes in rapid response situations. “The EMS Modernization Act begins to break down the disorganized and - at times - isolationist approach to governing EMS in our state, and chooses a more cohesive regionally-informed approach.”

Oregon’s Emergency Medical System is currently subject to multiple state-level committees doing EMS work separate from one another, along with fire districts, ambulance districts, hospitals, and counties all setting their own policies around how time-sensitive emergencies are handled in their immediate area. The result is a lack of uniform standards for patient definitions and protocols of care, which can mean patients get taken farther distances in a time-sensitive emergency than necessary.

HB 4081, which carries endorsements from those same committees, hospitals, fire services, ambulance agencies, and counties, restructures the EMS governance network under a single State EMS Program, with EMS Regions presenting plans that speak to their capacities. These regional plans inform the many local organizations that are currently forced to work alone.

In public testimony before the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care, the Oregon State Ambulance Association [stated](#): “We believe this legislation will be instrumental in modernizing the EMS system in Oregon. We are confident that HB 4081 will be helpful to address Time Sensitive Emergencies and will tackle the challenges the industry faces.”

The EMS Modernization policy framework was originally built from a 2010 task force, led by Dr. John Moorhead, and many of the participants from that original task force were included in crafting this iteration of the EMS Modernization Act. They believe it represents one of the most important changes in Oregon Emergency Medicine in the last 40 years.

House Bill 4081 now heads to the Governor’s desk for signature.

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