



April 7, 2017

The Honorable Patty Murray United States Senate 154 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515	The Honorable Ron Wyden United States Senate 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510
The Honorable Maria Cantwell United States Senate 511 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515	The Honorable Jeff Merkley United States Senate 313 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

## **Senate letter of support for H.R. 654 –**

### **The Pacific Northwest Earthquake Preparedness Act of 2017**

Dear Senators:

As the governing body of the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization of the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan region, we urge you to support passage of the Pacific Northwest Earthquake Preparedness Act of 2017 (H.R. 654), which the U.S. House overwhelmingly passed on March 27, 2017. The Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) is a bi-state partnership of local and regional government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector stakeholders representing the Portland Metropolitan Region (PMR) collaborating to increase the region's resiliency to disasters, including earthquakes.

The legislation, introduced by Rep. Peter DeFazio, directs FEMA to develop a plan and fully fund the purchase and installation of an earthquake early warning system (EEWS) for the Pacific Northwest. The bill also directs the President to establish an Earthquake and Tsunami Task Force to develop a strategy to better protect and prepare for major earthquakes and tsunamis.

Both Oregon and Washington are earthquake prone, including to a catastrophic Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) earthquake, and yet lack an EEWS. These paradigm-shifting systems use earthquake science and the technology of monitoring systems to alert devices and people when shaking waves generated by an earthquake are expected to arrive at their location. The seconds to minutes of advance warning can allow first responders, citizens and critical systems to take actions to protect life and property from destructive shaking.

Many countries around the world, including Japan, Mexico, China, Taiwan, Romania, and Turkey, not only have an EEWS in place but have seen how they can reduce earthquake damage and casualties. During the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake in Japan, for example, the alert system gave millions of people extra time to seek safety and is credited with preventing any trains from derailing. Unfortunately, in most cases, earthquake early warning

systems are deployed following a devastating loss of life. Mexico's system was first deployed after the 1985 quake that claimed 30,000 lives. With your support, we have the opportunity to develop and deploy an EEWS ahead of a catastrophic Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) earthquake.

At present, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), along with a coalition of state and university partners, is developing and testing an EEWS called ShakeAlert ([www.shakealert.org](http://www.shakealert.org)) for the U.S. West Coast. Before the system is fully in place to send warnings to the general public, long term funding must be secured and additional seismic sensors must be deployed. As part of its own commitment to the success of ShakeAlert, the RDPO Policy Committee in 2016 approved a policy for partners around the five-county Portland Metropolitan Region to work collaboratively on developing and implementing consistent messaging to educate the region's 2.2 million population on preventative and protective actions that can be taken if warned of an imminent earthquake as part of pre- and post-earthquake public education campaigns.

It is only a matter of time before Washington, Oregon and/or other states in the Pacific NW are hit with a devastating earthquake, the consequences of which will be felt throughout the Nation. Earthquake early warning systems present a new and unique opportunity to warn first responders, the public and critical systems of impending shaking, which can initiate actions that save lives, reduce injuries and mitigate some property damages.

We thank you, in advance, for working to make an earthquake early warning system in the Pacific Northwest a reality by supporting the passage of the Pacific Northwest Earthquake Preparedness Act of 2017 in the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

**The Regional Disaster Preparedness Policy Committee**

Councilor Jeanne Stewart, Clark County, Washington (Chair)

Councilor Kathryn Harrington, Metro Regional Government (Vice Chair)

Mayor Ted Wheeler, City of Portland, Oregon

Councilor Bill Turlay, City of Vancouver, Washington

Councilor Lacey Beaty, City of Beaverton, Oregon

Mr. Nolan Young (City Administrator), City of Fairview, Oregon

Councilor Karylann Echols, City of Gresham, Oregon

Councilor Rich Allen, City of Troutdale, Oregon

Commission Chair Jim Bernard, Clackamas County, Oregon

Commissioner Margaret Magruder, Columbia County, Oregon

Commissioner Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County, Oregon

Commissioner Dick Schouten, Washington County, Oregon

Mr. Vince Granato (COO), Port of Portland

Mr. Harry Saporta, (Safety and Security Executive), Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet)

In addition:

Mayor Denny Doyle, City of Beaverton, Oregon