



**Testimony before the Senate Business and Transportation Committee  
Senate Bill 833 (Short term Driver's License)  
By Carson Lord, Tree Frog Nursery  
President, Oregon Association of Nurseries Board of Directors  
April 11, 2013**

Chairman Beyer, Vice Chair Starr, members of the committee, for the record my name is Carson Lord and I serve as the President of the Board of Directors for the Oregon Association of Nurseries. The OAN strongly encourages the committee to support Senate Bill 833, a common sense solution to reducing unlicensed and uninsured motorists on Oregon's roads.

**The economic footprint of the nursery and greenhouse industry**

Nursery association members represent wholesale and Christmas tree growers, retailers and greenhouse operations. Our members have spent generations as stewards of the state's natural resources. The nursery and greenhouse industry remains the state's largest agricultural sector despite a severe economic downturn. As the nation's second largest nursery state with over \$744 million in sales, our growers ship their products throughout the country.

**SB 833 is the OAN's top legislative priority for 2013**

I am the owner of Tree Frog Nursery, located just outside the town of Silverton. We are a family owned nursery, and we focus on the production of woody ornamentals, growing roughly 65 varieties of grafted conifers, Japanese maples, topiaries and boxwood. This is the nursery industry's busiest time of the year. This is the season where we make most of our money shipping plant material all over the country. Nurseries are not a 9 to 5 job; we are a sun up to sun down – and sometimes beyond that – business.

It is critical that this committee and the Oregon legislature pass SB 833. We have heard a lot about the fact that this issue is about public safety – that is absolutely true. As a nursery owner, citizen, and father of three children, I believe Oregon needs to allow every resident the opportunity to prove they know the rules of the road, get a license and be insured.

However the main purpose for me being away from my nursery today is that SB 833 is critical for the survival of my industry. As a business, I struggle with the escalating cost of transportation, energy and increased competition by states much closer to my customers. Our industry needs employees who are willing to do the hard, labor intensive, skilled work required to propagate, grow, harvest and ship a plant or tree. Agriculture is one of the increasingly rare industries that actually makes something in this country. We require a workforce to do it and those employees need to be able to get to work and provide for their families.

I have heard reports from several nurseries and know from my own experience that there is a labor shortage this year, despite Oregon's 8.4% unemployment rate. Some of these nurseries are in districts that members of this committee represent. A major nursery in Washington County informed me that they do not have enough labor to dig the plants their customers have ordered, meaning they lose out on the sale. Lost sales can mount into a lost year. And in this business, if you lose a year – you lose your company.

The opponents of this bill are making this issue about illegal immigration. It's true that this entire problem could be solved by comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. Our state can't give agricultural work visas. What we can do is remove barriers for Oregon's undocumented residents to participate in the economy, pay taxes and drive safely to church, school, work and to the store.

**The OAN supports a short-term driver's license for all Oregon residents**

I am pleased to submit, in addition to my testimony, the letter of support by the major business associations and leaders of this state. Oregon needs to continue its economic recovery, have safe roads, and resolve a problem that has been growing since 2008 – a slow poison on the vitality of labor-dependent sectors – the loss of our workforce.

I have never heard a politician in Oregon say that they were against business or agriculture; I hope that support is demonstrated by action on this bill. I respectfully ask that you support SB 833.

Thank you for your time and attention.