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To the Honorable Ken Helm and Members of the House Committee on Energy & Environment:

Please do not support the passage of House Bill 2656. My family and I oppose HB 2656.

This bill will destroy the very communities that it is supposed to protect. If forestry and timber production are shutdown or severely curtailed, thousands of jobs will be lost. The ripple effect will hurt everyone from the barista to the city council. There will be no one left in rural communities to drink the water. Timber and forestry jobs are family wage jobs that are vital to the rural communities across our great State. My family has worked in the timber/forest industry since the 1940's. My grandfather was a logger in the Tillamook area. My father was a forester. I am currently a forester. I have seen the damage that "good intentions" have done to our rural forestry and agricultural communities and families that live there. These cannot be ignored.

Our Oregon Forest Practice Act works very well. It protects water, fish, wildlife and the communities that we live and work in. Those of us who are fortunate work in the forests of Oregon take our stewardship very seriously. We work hard to protect water quality through locating/designing roads properly, building high quality road surfacing to minimize sediment delivery, and limiting log hauling during times that may cause water quality issues. We buffer streams to promote and protect the water quality and aquatic species. We minimize our use of herbicide, used only on the first couple of years of a stand that takes 40 to 60 years to grow. We buffer our minimal herbicide use around all streams, wetlands, lakes, homes, and schools. We protect our water and communities. We live in these communities. We drink this water too.

I encourage you to visit our forests with any forester, and see what we do and the vitality of the forests we care for. Again, we do not take our stewardship of the forests and the water of Oregon lightly.

HB 2656 ignores our stewardship, is not based on a fair understanding of working forests and the protections provided by Oregon and federal laws, and would undermine working families and rural communities. Please do not support the passage of HB 2656.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samuel Howard

20 years as a Forester, graduated in 1998 from Oregon State University with a B.S. in Forest Engineering.