

March, 12th 2019

Members of the House Committee on Energy & Environment,

I am deeply concerned about House Bill 2656. I have grown up playing and working in the woods. In fact I lived in my parent's basement for years until I saved enough money to buy a little piece of forest land that I could live on and manage. I love Oregon's forests. The long term health of our timberland and water sources is of the utmost importance to me.

HB 2656 would make it prohibitively difficult for me to manage my little forest. There are already rules that protect water on forest land. This legislation would go too far and would make it illegal for me to cut patches of my timber. In fact, I would be barred from even building the roads necessary to access the trees. Furthermore the herbicide bans would make the control of many invasive species nearly impossible. The proposed legislation is particularly frustrating because I have never poisoned any water. I don't understand how the state could be justified in preventing me from managing my forest when I have hurt no one.

Beyond the significant economic damage this bill would do to me personally I am concerned about the implications for my community. Most of the sawmills have already gone out of business due to the dramatic curtailment of logging in the federal and state forests over the past few decades. I fear this legislation could signal the end for many more. My community is already struggling and economically depressed. A large percentage of my neighbors, like myself, depend on the forest products industry from their livelihoods. What happens if we suffer another blow?

I am also worried about the implications of this legislation for the region as a whole. At a time when the state is struggling to find funding it is dangerous to put a major industry in jeopardy. Tax receipts will certainly fall if businesses fail and people lose work. It is also likely that some of the displaced will require aid, further exacerbating budget shortfalls. Additionally, I find it odd that we would look to limit timber harvest during a time when there is a housing shortage. What should we build our homes out of if not lumber? Steel? Concrete? Surely the alternatives to wood are far from perfect.

This bill is analogous to hypothetical rules that would prevent the Midwestern states from growing corn or wheat. Oregon's forest products industry is the best in the world at growing trees and then turning them into the lumber that shelters people in our country and many others. We have achieved a healthy balance between economic and environmental concerns. Please let us continue this proud tradition.

Sincerely,

Izak Monroe

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