

Thank you for taking my testimony today. My name is Amy Lindahl. I am an educator in Portland, Oregon and am testifying in support of House Bill 2357.

When I first heard of the effort to end OFRI, I was worried about how this would impact students and teachers. For 14 years, I struggled, every year, to get my high school science students outside, doing field work and learning ecological ideas through their own experimentation. OFRI bus funding was often an important part of making these trips happen. Granted, it was only one piece of a complicated puzzle: I also needed to find gear, sign up volunteers, write additional grants, create curriculum...the list goes on.

I wasn't confused about OFRI; I knew it was a mouthpiece for the timber industry. While I didn't use their curriculum, I could see how their ads were rife with half-truths, designed to misinform the public around logging practices and impacts, meant to confuse and further divide us.

But I took the money, because I understood it to be my only option for getting kids outside.

After learning more about OFRI's many areas of corruption, I am now FULLY in support of this bill. We are in a moment of bold reimaginings of our systems, in which we center equity and access. Why should the timber industry decide how to spend tax dollars, which are promised to outdoor and environmental education? We can do much better with these funds.

The first step is to end OFRI. These tax dollars, which have been largely dedicated to propaganda and misinformation campaigns, must be redirected to K-12 outdoor education programs.

Then, with this greater access to funding and a focus on equity, we can provide environmental learning experiences that serve ALL of our Oregon students. We can establish programs that lift the burden off of teachers, making sure they have the supports they need to get students outside. We must develop field curriculum resources that are science-based and help our students become critical thinkers about our environment, so they can deeply understand the challenges we all face and are ready to work together to solve them.

Vote yes on House Bill 2357. End OFRI. Use these tax dollars to bring K-12 environmental and field education to all students. Let's make tax dollar spending transparent, for the good of all people and our environment.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,
Amy Lindahl