



Oregon Small Woodlands Association

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Chair Witt, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Hudson, and Members of the Committee;

My name is Amy Jahnke. I am a forester, I have a doctorate in forestry and forest products, a background in rural economic development and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Small Woodlands Association, or OSWA. We oppose HB 2357.

More than 70% of the funding for the OFRI supports K-12 and general public education. OFRI connects the general (often urban dwelling) public with the realities of on-the-ground forest management practices and principles. I've seen the rural/urban divide play out in different ways across the country, and anytime urban people are imposing values and taxes on rural people, not only is it not fair to do when they are already struggling, but that causes resentment. We have an opportunity here in Oregon to work together to solve the problem. But that means listening to rural people.

Right now, rural Oregonians are telling you that rural economic sustainability in Oregon depends on healthy forests AND a healthy products industry. Forest owners, including our small woodland owners, spend countless hours and dollars tending their forest lands, nurturing those investments until the age that trees are economically valuable and ecologically viable to harvest. There is an economic component to sustainability that is critical (it's one of the three legs of the stool of sustainability) and often neglected. Imposing a 5% severance tax on the value of timber harvested would be detrimental to not only the economic feasibility of growing trees (and thus encouraging conversion of forest lands to other uses), but to the entire supply chains that rely on this raw material.

In addition, small woodland owners have been hard hit by recent natural disasters, both fire and ice, making this the worst possible time for new taxes on our landowners. The legislature's focus should be on restoring the hundreds of thousands of acres of burned forests back to healthy, thriving forests that protect water quality, capture and store carbon, and are less likely to reburn. Another priority should be helping those who lost their homes (many of whom were small woodland owners) recover from their losses. Now is not the time to tax people who are trying to rebuild our forests and our rural communities.

We urge you to oppose HB 2379. Thank you for reading my testimony.

Amy D. Jahnke, PhD