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**Testimony Supporting HB 2386 submitted to the
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources**

23 March 2021

Chair Witt and members of the Committee, my name is Michael Harte and I am a Professor in the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University in Corvallis. I am an economist and physical geographer by training. As well as working in academia, I have worked around the world as a lobbyist for the fishing industry and environmental non-governmental organizations and also as a senior manager in government agencies.

I had the pleasure of serving on the SB 202 Task Force on Independent Scientific Reviews for Natural Resources in the state of Oregon. I also served on Oregon's Independent Multi-disciplinary Science Team from 2006 to 2011, the last independent science advisory in Oregon that was disestablished by SB 202. I currently serve on the Science and Statistical Committee of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council that ensures the Council is basing their decisions on the best available science.

I want to thank Representative Holvey for drafting and introducing HB 2386, which aligns with the recommendations in the SB 202 Task Force report. My testimony represents my view as a researcher with over 25 years of experience in natural resource and environmental issues. It does not represent the views of the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Science or OSU.

Throughout my career in different roles and in different countries, I have been involved in complex, contentious multi-disciplinary issues in natural resources that involved multiple government agencies, many stakeholders, and lawmakers of different political persuasions. Competing science, strong advocacy and, at times -- active disinformation campaigns -- made the task of charting a way forward controversial and challenging. Yet these kinds of issues, often called "wicked problems" are fundamental not just to the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of this generation, but to the wellbeing of future generations. Such problems include invasive species, wildfires, human and wildlife interactions/conflict and environmental health. Looking forward, it would be a brave person who would swap places with our counterparts sitting in this room 50 or 100 years in the future given the natural resource challenges they are likely to be facing.

Today, more than ever in a climate of "alternative facts" and censorship of federal agency science, we need independent scientific advice on natural resource issues to provide a beacon of objectivity.

No matter the direction we choose to go, this beacon helps establish both where we have come from and where we might be going. Without it, we stumble directionless.

HB 2386 creates an independent scientific review process that is transparent and inclusive, that focuses on critical issues important to all of Oregon. The process is both cost effective and flexible. Reviews conducted under this process will help both lawmakers and decision makers across the state. I note California and Washington State both have independent scientific advisory bodies. I support adoption of HB 2386.

I want to thank Chair Witt and members of the Committee for Agriculture and Natural Resources for considering HB 2386. I urge the committee to adopt the bill. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.