

Testimony HB 335-8

Chair Golden and members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery:

Before beginning, I need to declare a conflict of interest, as a three term member of the Northwest Regional Forest Practices Committee.

I am a small woodland owner, bordered by industrial timberlands, speaking as someone concerned with the need to optimize our forest practices for climate change, and to provide better riparian protection. Therefore I support reducing the members of the Board of Forestry who are directly and economically involved in the timber industry from three to two, one of them a small woodland owner. I believe it is important to have both these voices on the Board. However, I believe the effects of our forest practices on climate change needs to be our top priority, not maximizing timber industry profitability. In my experience, members of the Board from the timber industry do support what they feel is best for Oregon and best for her forests. We must accept that for those with an economic stake in the outcome, they will nevertheless believe that what is best for the constituency they represent is best for Oregon. With a climate emergency upon us, it makes sense to reduce the number of members who represent the timber industry.

On the other hand, with fewer Board members with practical, on-the-ground experience in forestry, it makes no sense to also disband the Forest Practices Committees. Their purpose is to provide feedback on practical considerations of potential new rules. It makes more sense to add one or two conservation-minded members to each committee with a solid knowledge base in fish biology or riparian habitat health rather than disband the committees entirely. This would provide opportunity for mutual learning, and for a broader range of feedback on effects of proposed new rules. During the time I have served on the Northwest Regional Forest Practices Committee, I have developed great respect for the knowledge and skills of the Department of Forestry staff, as well as my fellow committee members. I believe it is important to have this regular contact between ODF staff and the persons actually growing and harvesting trees.

In summary, I agree we are long overdue for a change in the composition of the Board of Forestry, more urgent now with the climate crisis upon us. On the other hand, it makes no sense to eliminate the Forest Practices Committees if we have fewer voices on the Board with direct, on-the-ground forestry experience. I support HB 335-8, with the removal of the Section 5 disbanding of the RFPCs.

Thank you,

Candace Bonner, MD, MPH