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The Honorable Representative Nathanson
House Committee on Revenue
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

April 8, 2021

Chair Nathanson and members of the committee. My name is Brennan Garrelts and I am Vice-President of the Board of Directors of Douglas Forest Protective Association (DFPA). DFPA is responsible for providing wildfire prevention, detection and suppression on over 1.6 million acres of private, county, state, BLM and tribal lands within Douglas County.

The DFPA's Board of Directors strongly opposes HB 2379, for three primary reasons found in section 14 of the bill:

1. Abolition of the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF) places the burden for large fire costs exclusively on those who harvest timber instead of the equitable shared responsibility between all forest landowners we have today.
2. Elimination of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee (EFCC) that oversees the OLFPF will increase the cost of fire suppression by dissolving the very mechanism that keeps a close eye on expenditures of private landowner dollars.
3. Deleting two policies from Oregon statute eliminates the state's fundamental priority to put out wildfires and eliminates the public's shared responsibility in funding fire suppression.

Currently, all non-federal forestland owners (not just those who harvest timber) pay into the OFLPF through a mix of harvest taxes, acreage assessments, and structure surcharges. This is a fiscally equitable recognition of the shared responsibility across all landowner and forestland management regimes, and a recognition that all forest landowners are at risk to wildfire, regardless of management type. Monies collected are available to any of the protection districts to cover emergency fire suppression costs. This bill would change that to a punitive system ONLY funded by those who actively manage forestland. In an era of mega fires driven by LACK of active management across Oregon, this idea is not only short sighted, but completely inequitable.

Oregon's Legislature has a long, proud history of promoting Public-Private Partnerships; recognizing that these partnerships provide benefits to all parties involved and exceed what any of the parties could accomplish on their own. By dissolving the EFCC, HB 2379 destroys a multi-party, Public-Private Partnership, in existence since 1930, between landowners, Oregon Department of Forestry, the General Fund, and Lloyd's of London Insurance Syndicate. Today, the EFCC provides policy, funding, oversight and reporting that functions as an internal auditing mechanism, ensuring the lowest possible costs for fire suppression. Eliminating that auditing mechanism will likely INCREASE suppression expenses.

Finally, the bill eliminates ORS 321.011 and 321.012. The first is literally the policy in statute that prioritizes putting out fires to protect lives, communities, and our natural resources. The second recognizes that because

the public shares in the responsibility of starting most fires in Oregon – on average 70% of fires in Oregon are human-caused – the public should also share in the responsibility of putting them out. One really wonders what the justification is for striking those statues from existence.

In conclusion, this bill drives Oregon away from a hugely successful public/private partnership and into a misguided failure of increased loss and cost due to wildfire.

Please consider voting no for HB 2379. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,

/s/ Brennan Garrelts

Brennan Garrelts
Board of Directors Vice-President
Douglas Forest Protective Association