

To whom it may concern:

I'm submitting this as my testimony in opposition to House Bills: 2379, 2389, 2430 and 2357. I have addressed these bills together because they all share a precursory misunderstanding of natural systems and as result they all end up at an inappropriate conclusion. Additionally I am writing in support of HB 2070. I support HB 2070 in hopes that education fosters a better understanding of how forestry is directly a solution to many of the problems the other bills attempt to address through additional taxes.

These bills proposing additional taxes all begin with the assertion that tree farming should incur a severance tax for removing a natural resource, this is wrong. For this to make sense there must be some cost, a taking or reduction in value, to the public at large. When done correctly, as stipulated by laws regarding forestry practices to insure sustainability, tree farming actually offers a net benefit to the public.

Tree farming sequesters CO2 into marketable products while improving the environment as a whole. Per the USDA's website, "Sustainable forestry practices can increase the ability of forests to sequester atmospheric carbon while enhancing other ecosystem services, such as improved soil and water quality. Planting new trees and improving forest health through thinning and prescribed burning are some of the ways to increase forest carbon in the long run. Harvesting and regenerating forests can also result in net carbon sequestration in wood products and new forest growth." This reality is in stark contrast to the concept that additional taxes against tree farming are justified due to some taking from the public.

In contrast to the treatment of tree farming we should consider how we treat photovoltaic electricity production, commonly referred to as solar but named more precisely here because tree farming is also the storage of solar energy. PV systems are generally understood as being beneficial to the public and we subsidized them in order to promote their widespread adoption. Tree farming offers the public at least as many benefits as PV electricity production, so why would we consider discouraging it through additional taxes?

I appreciate the states need for additional revenue. I think addressing climate change, helping struggling communities economically, reducing plastic waste, insuring access to clean water and air, and providing affordable housing are all goals worthy of public support. That being said it is inappropriate to single out tree farmers, who already directly address these issues through their work, as a group responsible for a more onerous tax burden than the general public.

Thank you for your time