

I am writing to voice my opposition and encourage you to vote no on House Bills 2379,

I live in Tillamook County and work as a silviculture forester for the Stimson Lumber Company. I have been growing and nurturing trees on the Oregon Coast for almost 8 years. It's a career that I truly enjoy and am passionate about. It provides me with the means to support my growing family in an area of the state where good paying jobs are hard to come by. It is also a source of pride and meaning in my life. In my career this far I have overseen the planting of 5 million seedlings. I work to ensure forestland remains forestland by establishing the next generation of forest after harvest and nurturing it so that it becomes healthy and productive. This is a long term commitment that takes 40 to 50 years to complete.

I am concerned in particular with the proposed tax increase in HB 2379 three reasons.

First It seems that rural Oregon is continually being bombard with tax increases. Just recently the Corporate Activities Tax was implemented and now we are talking about adding an additional severance tax to timber harvest. Forest landowners already pay property taxes, a harvest tax, incomes taxes, and a fire protection tax. Increased taxes reduce job opportunities and economic activities in rural communities like mine. This is something the community cannot afford. The forest industry currently provides over 60,000 family wage jobs. These jobs support families that are the backbone of small rural communities. These are communities still dealing with the economic impacts of the Covid pandemic. These are communities that have suffered from the worst fire season Oregon has seen in decades. Not only are these jobs important economically but the people who hold them are also active members of the community. For example, during this summer's disastrous wildfires many members of the timber industry, myself included donated time, resources, and equipment to fight the fires and protect our communities.

The second reason I wish to encourage you to vote no on increased taxes to timber harvest is because when the cost of managing timberland goes up, less productive forestland becomes too expensive to manage. This leaves it vulnerable to being converted to an alternate use, most often being cleared for residential housing. Loss in forestland means a loss to a renewable resource, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. Oregon has maintained 94% of its forestland under its current current tax and land use system compared with our neighbors like Washington and California who have lost over 15%.

Third is that a severance tax is intended to be a tax on non-renewable resources severed from the land. This is not the case with forestry since it is a renewable resource. The trees that are harvested today were planted and nurtured by foresters just like me for the purpose of producing wood as well as a suite of environmental benefits. This is no different from a farm who grows and harvests wheat or a vineyard that grows and harvest grapes. No one else in Oregon who grows a renewable crop pays a severance tax, so why should forest landowners?

I urge you to please vote no on these detrimental bills. Piling on new taxes will only hurt rural communities, increase the loss of forestland to development, and unfairly target one of Oregon's most renewable resources.

Thank you for your time.
Jacob Hilger