

February 25, 2021  
Re HB2379

Chair Witt, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Debbie Gordon, I live in Multnomah County.

I'm here today to ask you to improve HB2379 - the Timber Tax Severance bill - by reinstating the tax and returning 60% to the counties as property taxes – to be used for the public good as the county decides.

I raised four daughters and was a serious volunteer in Portland Public Schools for 30 years – from the 80's through the oughts.

I was involved in the 90's, when two things happened. First, The Oregon Legislature passed the Oregon Education Act for the 21st Century, issuing in site councils and eventually the Quality Education Model spearheaded by Representative Lynn Lundquist – which described a quality public education and detailed the costs.

And second, Oregonians also passed Measure 5 which redistributed a large share of local property taxes to the state with the goal of more equitable public services funding across the state. We were told schools would be “held harmless”, but that did not happen. We began the long slide of inadequate funding for schools. In Multnomah County that meant fewer teachers, and loss of important curriculum such as music, art, PE and Libraries. This was heartbreaking year after year - to have that vision of great schools that the Quality Education Model described and to see it slipping away for lack of adequate funding.

But if it was bad in Multnomah County – it was far worse in counties that relied on Timber revenue. Timber counties desperately needed the Timber severance tax that began to be phased out, with no replacement revenue.

We're all in this together as Oregonians! Public services have suffered enough – schools, libraries, public safety – including wildfire preparedness. Please improve the Timber Severance Tax bill. Reinstate the tax and return 60% of the revenue to the Counties as property taxes to be allocated to the public good and public services as they decide and prioritize locally.

Thank you for your consideration,

Debbie Gordon

Multnomah County