

Chair and members of the committee, I am Ellie Hilger and I live in Tillamook County with my husband and daughter that just turned one earlier this month.

I represent the working families that will be affected by the timber taxes that you are proposing today. My family is lucky enough to be supported by one of the 60,000 family wage jobs that timber provides in the state of Oregon. Timber is the backbone of my community on the Tillamook coast. I am a special education teacher in the district and I know many families that depend on Timber. Twenty five percent of the budget from the school that I teach at comes from timber revenue.

All across rural Oregon, families like mine have endured massive layoffs and the worst wildfires in Oregon history. Nearly 40% of the Labor day fires were on private forestland. A new tax on timber will eliminate jobs and businesses that have already suffered multiple hardships. Rural Oregon cannot take anymore punches to the gut. This tax only furthers the urban/rural divide that we see ripping across our great State. Once again rural Oregon has to suffer at the hands of urban activists with grand ideas that just don't make any sense. I thought that the decades-long timber wars were coming to an end with last year's Memorandum of Understanding between timber and environmentalists? The old battle lines are being redrawn, and once again, families like mine are in the crosshairs.

In truth, all Oregonians are in the crosshairs, because reinstating a severance tax encourages conversion of forestland to other uses (residential, industrial, agricultural) that do not provide environmental benefits like carbon capture and storage, wildlife habitat, clean water, and recreation. Let's not forget the timber is the greatest renewable resource that we have in Oregon. On average four trees are planted for every one harvested. It is an injustice to place a severance tax on a renewable crop, since no other renewable resource is taxed in this way, such as grapes and hazelnuts.

Chair and committee members, I respectfully ask that instead of imposing a harmful tax during this unprecedented time of COVID and wildfires, that you instead focus on restoring hundreds of thousands of acres of scorched forests. This is not the first time wildfires have burned in Oregon. The historic Tillamook burn was a series of fires over several years – reburning the same footprint multiple times until the state undertook a massive replanting effort that generated the thriving forest we have today. Let's learn from history instead of ignoring it. Let's focus on rehabilitation.

Finally, I ask that you listen to the 60,000 plus timber families that I represent and whose livelihoods you have in your hands. We have suffered enough this past year. Thank you for your time.