

We're actually testifying in opposition to HB 2357, 2379, and 2598, each of which seeks to defund, in varying degrees, the OFRI.

While we now live part time in Oregon and Hawaii, we raised my family there, including three sons who have been or still are, wildland firefighters. My wife and I lived and worked in Salem and Lebanon for over 30 years. We are also longstanding progressive Democrats and encourage responsible environmental policy especially as it relates to our forest resources. We have been in Hawaii during the fires and COVID pandemic, but raised and donated around three thousand dollars in support of Oregon families during the horrible fires back in the late summer, 2020

Defunding or seriously curtailing funding for the OFRI is premature and frivolous, given the devastating fires that affected Oregon particularly last year. While I understand that there is controversy surrounding the organization, a full investigation is not completed and the positive good works in research and education that the organization has done over the years is undeniable. It is particularly these educational and education funding efforts of the OFRI, of both adults and children, that must continue. These are essential services now more than ever. Science supports excellent forest maintenance and preservation going forward. This means neither slash and burn policies, nor policies which over-protect trees at the expense of major fires near our population centers. There is clearly a middle road that must be taken, and the education of the public on that middle road at this point in time, given the devastating fires last year, is absolutely essential. Raizing the OFRI is not the correct move at the current time. It will create an unnecessary and wanton vacuum in forestry education when it is needed most.

While we're aware that the OFRI board is probably over represented with Forestry Industry representatives at the present time, that is an easily remedied situation, and should be easily accomplished going forward if the House and Senate believe that some action must be taken now.

Oversight is essential, investigation is essential, education is essential. Damaging the most solid educational resource in the state for forestry science issues at this time must not stand. PLEASE. We urge you. Find another way, going forward, if you must. But do not create this educational vacuum at this time. It's frivolous for you to do so.

I'm available should anyone wish to contact me about this issue. Simply use my email to contact me if that becomes necessary.

Do the right thing, be thoughtful, respond deliberatively. If you decide with time that the OFRI must be defunded, let it be with a plan for the future education of Oregonians preserved. We appreciate your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,  
Michael T. Puerini, MD  
Azhar Puerini