



March 1, 2021

Dear Chair Witt, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

Beyond Toxics strongly supports HB 2357 to eliminate the Oregon Forest Research Institute and require that revenue from timber tax receipts under the forest products harvest tax be redirected from OFRI to support sound forestry practices and to collaborate with other agencies for healthy forest management. As members of the Oregon Just Transition Alliance we support this policy as part of our work for environmental justice in Oregon. We see HB2357 as, in part, an environmental justice issue due to the fact that the forest harvest tax is used to promote forest practices that harm rural and under-resourced communities, harm forest workers who apply pesticides or work in areas that have been sprayed, and contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases and a changing climate. Climate change itself worsens environmental conditions associated with chronic illness and causes social and economic disruptions affecting disadvantaged communities, first and foremost.

Beyond Toxics is a statewide environmental justice organization advancing policies that ensure meaningful participation and grassroots leadership from Oregon's frontline and impacted communities. We have years of experience supporting rural Oregon residents to come to the Legislature to share *in their own words* how they have been impacted by timber clearcuts, aerial herbicides sprays and declining drinking water quality.

The Oregonian-OPB-ProPublica report published on 8/4/2020 detailed how OFRI uses their resources to suppress science on forest-carbon, promote industrial forestry practices that affect Oregon's drinking water supplies, and dabble in inappropriate lobbying efforts. Their agenda and propaganda machine have not benefited Oregonians, and the funds behind their agenda are best redirected to science, community health and modernized forest management practices.

Oregonians would benefit from repurposing OFRI funds towards investments in adaptive resource management and sound climate science as it relates to forests, carbon sequestration and storage, clean air and bountiful, clean drinking water. All of this should be considered in the face of increasing wildfire risk and smoke pollution, the frightening loss of homes and community infrastructure, and the loss of wildlife habitat. Our staff has attended many "forums" and "educational events" promoted by OFRI and listened to slick, yet shallow presentations featuring questionable science "facts" such as *native bees prefer to nest in clear cuts and not their natural habits*, or *growing small trees on short rotations is better for the climate than mature forests*.

Please vote yes on **HB 2357** to end OFRI's efforts to undermine climate and environmental health research from Oregon State University, carry out one-sided educational programs and spend millions of dollars every year claiming that Oregon's logging laws are modern and strong, when in reality they are stuck in a 1970's time warp and weaker than our neighboring states.

Sincerely,

Lisa Arkin, Executive Director
Beyond Toxics

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