



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of HB 3016

March 1, 2023

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy and Levy, Members of the Committee.

My name is Khanh Pham, Representative for House District 46. Thank you for opening this public hearing today on HB 3016, the Trees Restoring Economic and Environmental Sustainability Act - or TREES Act, for short.

Here in this committee, we are constantly asked to weigh in on new technologies and programs to stem our climate crisis, save energy, conserve water, and keep Oregonians safer from extreme heat. So what if I told you that there is a solution to all of that and more – and it's 100% proven, is the cheapest, most effective, and fastest-to-deploy carbon-eating machine, reduces climate pollution, recharges our water tables, freshens our air, and even keeps us safe in extreme weather. In addition - this technology is **self-replicating** at close to no cost, with no assembly required, it just...grows - right here in Oregon, while creating good jobs and careers in rural, urban, and suburban communities?

You'd tell me, "Wow! Rep. Pham that sounds like some kind of game changer! We'd be crazy not to invest!"

So, here is our chance. With the support of colleagues in both the House and Senate, today I bring forward HB 3016, the TREES Act, so that Oregonians of all walks of life can reap the incredible returns on public investments in Green Infrastructure. We've submitted our -1 amendment for drafting, and we feel all the input and great ideas offered by folks across the state have made this bill even stronger, but the core of our bill remains strong.

With our -1 amendment, this Act defines "green infrastructure" as things like tree canopy, soft stormwater systems, regenerative landscaping methods that can grow food and store carbon, and indeed our native plants and tree species like our threatened Port Orford Cedar, and the nursery stock that can keep our landscapes growing strong for generations to come. We have to invest in protecting, restoring, and growing these kinds of green infrastructure investments. They have myriad environmental, economic, and social co-benefits, which many witnesses will be explaining in today's hearing.

The centerpiece of the TREES Act is the creation of a grant making program, to be administered by the Department of Land Conservation and Development. It is designed to offset the costs of planning, developing, and maintaining community green infrastructure projects. There is an emphasis on native seed banks and nurseries, and on supporting and implementing green infrastructure master plans, especially those developed in partnership with public schools, campuses, houses of worship, community development agencies and nonprofits, and so forth - to create integrated, neighborhood-based strategies to leverage the benefits.

One provision that will help set the TREES Act up for success is the support for the Department of Forestry to develop a tree canopy assessment tool to evaluate where tree canopy is vibrant and where it is lacking, the health of existing canopy, and interacting rights of way where green infrastructure could be sited.

There is also a strong workforce development strategy embedded in the TREES Act, as 30% of grant program funds are set aside for projects with a workforce and economic development component. This act creates the “Community Green Nurseries” designation for those nurseries that help prevent pests and diseases, use good labor practices, and partner to provide non-invasive nursery stock for community projects, and encourages grant recipients to partner with these nurseries. Oregon Nurseries Association will be testifying in favor later this hearing.

This measure also establishes a technical and financial assistance program at the Department of Forestry to help communities proactively plan, mitigate, and recover from pests, diseases and threats both present and future - like Emerald Ash Borer, Sudden Oak Death, and other threats to our forests that may emerge in the coming years.

Oregon is known around the world for our magnificent trees. But for all the tremendous wealth of canopy our forests hold, we also have unshaded areas with dangerously inadequate tree canopy in what are known as “heat islands” in our communities. These are areas or neighborhoods, typically in lower income communities, with low tree canopy and built infrastructure - lots of pavement - that absorbs heat and makes it hotter than in the “leafy streets”, which are often in more affluent areas.

In climate extremes, trees can mean the difference between life and death. As we saw [During the Heat Dome event of 2021](#), heat kills, as almost 100 people died in Oregon from that event alone. That’s why I am here to champion this measure, with urgency.

An incredibly cheap, elegant, job-creating, climate cooling solution is here before us today, and it’s what we’re known for around the world. It is the humble tree - that cleans the air, and provides shade from the summer sun. It is the often invisible roots of wet-prairie grasses that slow the rainstorm through our streets, it’s the soil micro-organisms that purify toxins. As summers get hotter and winter storms worsen, Oregonians need healthy tree canopy, better stormwater management, and parks to make our communities more livable.

Please join me in supporting HB 3016, the TREES Act for Oregon.