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March 2, 2023

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE Salem Oregon 97301

Re: HB 5020 - Oregon Department of Forestry Budget Support

Co-Chairs Pham and Dembrow and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Oriana Magnera and I am the Energy Climate and Transportation Manager at Verde. Verde is a community-based organization who works to build environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise. We began our work as a landscaping social enterprise that in part did urban forestry and other green infrastructure work. Verde is new to engaging with the Department of Forestry, but we are here today in support of HB 5020, the agency's budget.

Verde's recent involvement has focused on helping ODF to deepen its commitment to equity and to better understand how environmental justice and forestry interact. Connection to nature also has many public health benefits, but for many communities enjoying the public forest land in Oregon is not always accessible. For others it is an essential way to connect to cultural-specific resources like the salal harvesting that many Latino/a/e and Indigenous community members engage in. Equity is embedded in forestry work, and Verde commands ODF for deepening its commitment through an existing DEI position and an incredible Tribal liaison.

The budget elements that are most important to equity in ODF's budget are:

POP 100, The Community Engagement & Climate Change POP includes added capacity and investments across three programs to enable more deliberate engagement with

diverse communities statewide and to increase the department's capability for planning and implementation around climate change and community resilience.

POP 101, The Interpretive Education POP will provide strategic investments to enable the Oregon Department of Forestry's Recreation, Education, and Interpretation Program to address the most significant barriers to access for communities on State Forests and better communicate why and how State Forest Lands are actively managed..

It would be an oversight to not include these important POPs in the 2023-2025 ODF budget, in addition to sufficient staffing for the Urban Forestry program. At a hearing yesterday some members of this committee were reminded that the two requested positions for this work are essential to growing it to scale and administering important expansion of green infrastructure in communities around the state.

Verde also supports the \$12.1 million for continuation of the Landscape Resiliency Program, although would note that this is almost a 50% decrease in funding from the 2021-2023 budget, but that wildfires or restoration needs have not decreased accordingly. I live in Lake County and am looking out my window at the burn line from the Cougar Peak fire, a mile from my house and can say that we must continue robust restoration and management work that helps protect ecological and community value.

Verde supports the \$3 million allocation for the Small Forestland Grant Program, although it too is a reduction from the 2021-2023 budget. Many BIPOC forest owners are small forest owners and these resources are necessary to help small forest owners do the important restoration and management work I just mentioned. It's especially important in Lake County where all of the forest land that is not federal is private.

POPs 113-116 focus on capital construction to improve ODF facilities, but many more facilities around the state are not sufficiently serving communities or staff. While not included in the governor's recommended budget, nor the ODF requested budget, a full examination of the facilities needs around the state and resources to meet those needs are important to sustainable work long term. For example, in Lake County, more and

better space is needed for sufficient staff to meet community needs around the private forest restoration work that takes up much of our local office's work.

Finally, Verde supports POP 104 to increase workforce development and POP 105 as well as any other resources that can be allocated to support federal partnerships and federal funding readiness, especially around sufficient match. There are substantial available resources to address forestry broadly and urban forestry specifically, but they will not be well harnessed or well deployed without capacity within the Department of Forestry. There's a lot of good work happening at ODF, and sufficient budget is needed to support and expand that good work.

Respectfully,

Oriana Magnera
Energy, Climate, and Transportation Manager, Verde