



House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Public Testimony in Support of HB 3016

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

Friends of Trees is an Oregon-based volunteer tree planting and community building non-profit. Our mission is to bring people together by inspiring our community members to plant, care for, and learn about trees. Since 1989, we've planted nearly a million trees and native shrubs in 6 counties across 2 states by engaging tens of thousands of community members via volunteer community tree planting events. This work has been made possible with dedicated, long-term funding and resources.

We all know we need trees more than ever. Heatwaves, flooding, and all of the increasingly catastrophic effects of climate change make it clear that every day needs to be the day for climate action. Which is why we're writing to support HB 3016, which establishes a comprehensive Community Green Infrastructure Program.

Community members throughout Clackamas, Lane, Multnomah, and Washington counties repeatedly share what our organization's community-based tree planting and tree care approach has meant to them and their communities. Many have shared how organizations like Friends of Trees is one of the things that makes living here in Oregon special. HB 3016, through the Community Green Infrastructure Grant Program, would help elevate and support more opportunities for Oregon community members.

This type of community-based tree planting takes time, long-term investment, and resources. To help ensure under-resourced, diverse communities across Oregon receive essential green infrastructure benefits, our State needs to invest in efforts that equitably engage the diverse communities that make up our state. HB 3016 can help more communities across the state have access to community-led tree planting.

The benefit of community tree planting is highlighted by a recent [peer-reviewed U.S. Forest Service researcher](#). Using Friends of Trees tree planting data for trees planted in the City of Portland over several decades, the research revealed the potential life-saving importance of trees and a 1700:1 benefit to cost ratio of tree planting through a human mortality lens.

Friends of Trees knows well what it means to not have the funding needed to do this work. For decades we planted trees in neighborhoods throughout Portland, made possible because of City-funding, but in 2022 the City discontinued their funding for that program. As a result, we haven't been able to continue our comprehensive, community-based tree planting program in Portland, programming that for over a decade focused on planting and caring for trees in low-income, low-canopy, high diversity neighborhoods and communities. When community-based, equity-focused tree planting and tree care isn't supported Oregon communities suffer.

HB 3016 provides a comprehensive, holistic approach to address these needs. For our organization, this funding could help us return our tree planting to areas where funding has been lost or isn't stable while also expanding our tree planting and tree care program into new areas, including communities in Lane, Benton, Clackamas and Washington counties and to center the needs of low-income and BIPOC community members in these areas and contribute to long-term community, environmental, and economic benefits.

This funding would also support helping communities identify what their current tree canopy is and needs to be, what the threats are to their tree canopy, and what to do when tree canopy is lost. And it also supports important partnerships with Oregon-based nurseries, who are a critical part of growing our climate future.

Supporting this bill is supporting the future of Oregon and Oregon communities.

We urge your support for HB 3016. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yashar Vasef', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Yashar Vasef

Executive Director,
Friends of Trees