

Submitter: Kathi Futornick
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure: HB4133

Thank you for agreeing to receive my written testimony in opposition to HB4133. My name is Kathi Futornick and I've worked in the environmental field for more than 30 years. The press has covered HB4133 and the influence of the timber industry on lawmakers, on the taxpayer-funded Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), on climate-related legislation, and on research conducted at our public universities (<https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2020/08/what-happened-when-a-public-institute-became-a-de-facto-lobbying-arm-of-the-timber-industry.html>). See the referenced article for more information.

“THE STATE PROTECTS MORE PRIVATE LAND THAN PUBLIC LAND. Privately owned industrial forestlands make up about 33% of the 16 million acres that the forestry department protects from wildfire.... Slightly less than one quarter of the land the department protects is public land.”
(<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/02/06/oregon-wildfire-protection-politics-timber-industry-forest-logging-taxes/#:~:text=Costs%20for%20protecting%20the%20state,the%20forestry%20department%20for%20protection>).

HB4133 would place even more burden on Oregon taxpayers by shifting the tax burden from Wall-street investment firms to homeowners. And there are other costs such as an increase in homeowner insurance due to increased fire risk. As the climate crisis worsens, wildfires are now “megafires” burning longer and with more intensity. And yet, even with climate models showing a 6-fold increase in megafires within the next 30 years, the industry has opposed all proposed climate legislation.

Why should Oregonians pay more? During the 1990's the forest industry crippled local communities by receiving an enormous tax break - revenues which supported essential community services. The tax advantages have increased the timber industry profits by billions while the bills supporting homeowners to harden their homes and for communities to develop wildfire mitigation plans went from \$35 million in 2021 to \$3 million in 2023.

Oregon homeowners will not have the financial support needed to withstand a wildfire, never mind a megafire. The 2020 Archie Creek fire was one of 5 megafires that spread through Oregon on Labor Day weekend burning more than 4,300 homes resulting in a \$1.9 billion assessed need – and many of those homeowners will not see financial support for years to come, if at all.

HB4133 should change its scope to help Oregonians prepare for a future with more wildfires, by increasing the tax on the timber industry and using those revenues to help Oregonians and communities mitigate wildfires, and to set up a fund to help those who have been and will be devastated by a future wildfire.

Thank you
Kathi Futornick