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On Behalf of: Self  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure: SB1593

From growing up in the McKenzie River Community in Rainbow/McKenzie Bridge, I have seen many of the effects logging and wildfire have had on our rural community and the landscape as a whole. In addition to being raised upriver and attending K-12 at McKenzie Schools, I was very fortunate to have experienced working for the US Forest Service as a wildland firefighter for 4 summers while attending college. This first 30-plus years of life provides an insightful perspective that I would like to share, along with my support for measure SB1593.

While I was a wildland firefighter from 2010 to 2013, it did not seem like forest fires had the possibility to burn into our home community. Since 2017, there have been consistent local threats of forest fires reaching and burning structures along the McKenzie River. For residents rebuilding from (and not impacted by) the 2020 Labor Day Fires, there is an understanding that the stress and trauma from a wildfire can return in a moment during the summer fire season. This threat of fire will not be going away.

In 2022, I was able to plan and host a free community event up the McKenzie for residents to share and talk about forest fire preparedness including home hardening and defensible space. From personally trying to gather information and grant options to fund local efforts for fire preparedness, I quickly found out there are not many options and they are not consistent. Many residents don't have the funds or physical ability to catch up with the fire preparation needed, so additional funds are required.

Oregon has already moved into a new future with more fire on the landscape and in our communities. I strongly believe we need to adapt to meet this hotter and dryer reality. We can not continue business as usual without expecting to experience more structure loss to fire. Before I was born, the severance tax on timber was removed in Oregon and an estimated \$3 billion was lost to our local and rural communities. Re-gaining this steady income stream from a severance tax is the best option I've seen for revitalizing our communities and preparing for future fires. Instead of harvesting and trucking resources away from these rural areas, it would require these companies to once again give more of those profits back.

This additional money will create more jobs to tackle hardening homes and creating defensible space. These jobs are also largely done by hand and close to structures which means they can't be mechanized and disappear like many timber jobs have become obsolete in past decades.

Seeing the added provision for more K-12 education around these topics of fire, might be one of the best parts of this proposed measure. I remember having Smokey The Bear come into our grade school classroom to teach us about fire safety, but there is now so much more to learn about fire preparation and home hardening. Teaching the younger generations, who will take that info home, could be the most effective way to create a new relationship and future with fire on the landscape.

Just this year I was fortunate to become a first-time homebuyer now living on the outskirts of Springfield, Oregon. The reality of home insurance also hit while seeing we have a higher insurance premium due to increased fire danger. The increase in insurance costs has been and will continue hitting Oregonians hard. Money talks, and if we don't start now in reducing fire hazards from the structures outward, rural Oregon will end up paying more for insurance, in addition to having a backlog of fire preparation work to deal with, which will be exponentially difficult to recover from.

We need to take action now, as it will take **YEARS** to prepare for fires. Measure SB1593 can be the first step toward a resilient future. No action, will take even longer and much more money to rebuild from future community loss in fires. Please think and **ACT** proactively for all of our futures living in Oregon. We can't afford not to.