

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express **my strong support for House Bill 3173** to help fund the OregonFlora program at Oregon State University. I am a professional botanist employed by a small environmental consulting firm based in Portland, and my career would have been immeasurably more difficult to pursue without OregonFlora and the devout authors, contributors, and researchers that maintain it. I wish to stress the importance of publicly accessible resources such as OregonFlora, the necessity for the funding which maintains them, and how such resources can enrich the lives of those who are able to access and enjoy them.

Oregon is a state that is blessed with a stunning diversity of landscapes, ecological communities, and industries that are able to flourish thanks to our flora. From the towering Sitka Spruces of the coast to the smallest spring blooms of the Columbia Plateau, we as Oregonians have an awesome responsibility to conserve the diversity and resources of this landscape and to ensure their longevity. For all enthusiasts and professionals to be able to access a tool that can allow them to better understand, appreciate, and enjoy the stunning diversity of the flora around us is an amazing thing and helps us pursue that responsibility in earnest.

From my time as a novice biology major at Lewis & Clark College to my pursuit of seasonal botanical work with Portland State University, OregonFlora has fueled my passion to better understand the flora of our state and enhanced my professional development for years in an amazing number of ways. Through access to this tool I was able to improve my understanding of local flora and the roles they occupy in their respective ecosystems, and my passion for such topics only grew.

As a consulting botanist and wetland scientist, OregonFlora is more important to me than ever before and allows me to effectively do my job. The comprehensive information managed by OregonFlora provides me with access to interagency taxonomic and occurrence information, and allows me to provide clients with timely and accurate information regarding the flora and associated ecosystems their properties host. As an employee of an Oregon-based small business, maintaining and growing our clientele is invaluable for myself and my fellow employees. The quality of our work, the confidence of our reports, and the growth of our business is entirely dependent upon our professional backgrounds and the resources available to us that help us grow. OregonFlora, more than any other publicly available resource I can think of, allows our business to thrive.

To close, **I urge your support of House Bill 3173** to ensure the resources of OregonFlora can continue to be maintained and developed for users statewide. Oregon needs documentation of its flora, and all Oregonians will be able to benefit from the accessibility of such an invaluable resource.

Sincerely,

Michael Stein