

Submitter: Ellen Mendoza

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3172

I support HB 3172 because it is a commonsense response to wildfires, which have dramatically increased in severity in Oregon, including areas such as Central Oregon with significant human populations.

Home hardening is a better response than so-called "forest thinning" programs. The main factor in determining a fire's severity is weather, especially fuel aridity (not density) and wind. The fuel profile of a forest is incidental to the impacts from high winds. Contrary to the idea that forests will not burn if they are thinned, studies have shown that thinning a forest can actually make wildfire behavior more intense by opening up the canopy, thus drying the fuel and increasing wind speed. Thinning is just an excuse for more logging, pushed by timber companies. Further, you cannot predict where a fire will take place, such that even if thinning were an effective method for reducing wildfire risk, it's very unlikely that you'd successfully place thinning efforts in an area that encounters fire prior to the thinned area growing back, thereby making the thinning useless. Further, logging forests leads to decreased carbon sequestration capability from the forest which then leads to a worsening of the climate crisis, which would then lead to worsening fires from more arid forests.

Please pass this first step in protecting Oregon citizens from the continuing danger of wildfire, caused by increasing effects of climate change.