

My name is Paulette Bierzychudek and I am an Oregon resident from House district 41. I write to offer my strong support for HB 3489, which would reinstate the timber severance tax.

The climate crisis is threatening the health and welfare of all Oregonians and of the natural world on which we depend. We must use every means at our disposal to combat and reverse climate change by drastically reducing our carbon dioxide emissions. Oregon's forests are an integral part of our ability to sequester carbon. Already elevated temperatures have greatly increased the frequency and intensity of wildfires, creating massive costs.

When the timber severance tax was established, it was supposed to provide local governments with steady revenue. This tax was phased down and eventually repealed in the 1990s, dramatically reducing the revenue provided by the commercial forest industry. Now large timber companies pay little for the fire protection services and other benefits they receive, which are funded primarily by Oregon taxpayers and small woodland owners.

The return of a robust severance tax, as mandated by HB 3489, would help counties provide essential services to their residents, would protect domestic water supplies, would incentivize longer harvest intervals, thus increasing carbon sequestration capacity, and – very importantly -- would provide funding to help to prevent, mitigate, and suppress wildfires. It is time for those who profit from forest land ownership to pay their fair share for its protection.

For these reasons I urge your support of HB 3489. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Paulette Bierzychudek  
Portland, OR