

Submitter: Willow Kasner
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3489

To the Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this dire issue. My name is Willow Kasner, and I am a sixth-generation Oregonian. My roots in this state run deep—both sides of my family came west in the late 1800s to work in the logging industry. While my immediate family is no longer in timber, some of my cousins still are, alongside a few local families I grew up with. I've witnessed firsthand the dramatic changes to our communities, landscapes, and economy as large industrial timber corporations have taken over more and more of our forestlands.

For two decades, Oregon's outdated and unjust timber taxation system has allowed massive corporations—especially Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Timber Investment Management Organizations (TIMOs)—to extract immense profits while contributing virtually nothing back to the communities or ecosystems they exploit. Meanwhile, small local logging families—the very people who built and sustained our rural economies—are left with an unfair tax burden deeming them unable to compete, and an increasingly impossible path to survival.

HB 3489 is a long-overdue step toward restoring fairness. It would not only bring balance to our timber industry through a more just taxation, but also provide essential funding for wildfire prevention, recovery, and the rural communities that currently receive no benefits despite the vast extraction happening in their backyards that affects them daily in multiple ways.

Today, these corporate timber owners rarely hire local loggers, and even more rarely is the wood milled locally. Instead, raw logs are often shipped overseas for processing.

Besides the disrespectful wastefulness of what's left behind—poles deemed unprofitable depending on market flux that become fuel for wildfires in a dried-out, barren landscape—many of these corporate landowners have never even set foot on the ground they exploit. They bear no responsibility for the devastation they cause—only a commitment to maximizing returns for their shareholders.

To me, it feels like legalized highway robbery. And it's time Oregon lawmakers stand up to these profiteers, hold them accountable, and make them pay their fair share—for the damage they leave behind, for the wildfires their practices exacerbate, and for the communities they abandon.

These tax reforms are not only fair—they are necessary. It is time these corporations are made to pay for the water loss, the drying of our landscapes, the risk to our health and safety, and the wildfire damage done to intact forests and the communities they surround.

And while comprehensive accountability may still be a long way off, HB 3489 is the first meaningful step we've had since the 1990s.

I've watched our forests be clear-cut, our local climate become more volatile, and our wildfire seasons grow more dangerous. And through it all, these corporations have not been held financially responsible. They take the trees, and we are left with the bill—every single time. We pay in worsening fire seasons, failing infrastructure, underfunded emergency services, weakened water tables and watersheds, and struggling communities with no safety net.

Oregonians deserve better. HB 3489 is a necessary and urgent measure to bring accountability to those most responsible for environmental harm and to reinvest in the people, towns, and ecosystems that make this state so special.

Any specific details, fiscal amounts, or appropriations needed, can be figured out later and added in as amendments if necessary, but we cannot wait any longer for the perfect Bill to come across your tables. This one is good enough, and can be ironed out in the future, but it gets us moving forward finally.

We cannot afford to wait.

I strongly urge you to pass HB 3489 and give Oregon voters the chance to choose justice, sustainability, and a future that supports all of us.

Sincerely,
Willow Kasner