

To: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue  
Senator Mark Meek, Chair  
Senator Mike McLane, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Committee

From: Susan Watkins, small forest landowner  
13440 SW McCabe Chapel Road, McMinnville, Oregon 97128

Re: SB 485-2

I SUPPORT this measure.

In 1992, my husband and I purchased 55 acres of nearly clearcut forestland outside McMinnville. During the 30+ years we have owned the property, we have worked hard to create a sustainable, healthy forest where trees are free to grow and wildlife abounds.

In 2002, I became a Master Woodland Manager through Oregon State University College of Forestry Extension. MWMs are asked to "give back" to their community, and I did so by helping to write the succession planning tool *Ties to the Land*, which helps landowners work with succeeding generations to plan for the future of their forests. Because trees are a long-lived "crop," one generation may not see the fruits of their labors in the forest. Passing the woodland on to their children is a way for aging owners to feel confident that the forest they've nurtured will thrive and survive.

Estate taxation can be a very real barrier to multi-generational forest management. The Legislature recognized this in 2023 by adopting the natural resource estate tax exemption. Unfortunately, this exemption has proven difficult to implement for small forest owners.

SB 485-2 is a big step toward reducing that barrier. SB 485-2 recognizes that forest management is not quantifiable in terms of days spent in the woods but, rather, in terms of active management activities like planting, release, pruning, thinning, road maintenance, salvage of downed logs, and debris dispersal. Landowners who engage in these activities are most likely to produce healthy, sustainable forests.

Another reason to make inheritance of well-maintained forests easy is that small forests provide benefits beyond marketable wood. Our small forests are most likely those the public sees in the low foothills. Many small forest owners offer recreational activities like hunting, hiking, and birding. Healthy forests provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. On our very small tree farm, we have elk, deer, hawks, owls, snakes, salamanders, pollinators, and more.

Encouraging the passing of forest land down to subsequent generations is a win-win for Oregon and small forest owners. Please pass SB 485-2.