

Written Testimony Opposing HB 4105

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Re: Opposition to HB 4105

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 4105. This bill represents a dramatic and deeply concerning shift in how Oregon manages its state forestlands. While framed as a planning requirement, HB 4105 would in practice convert Oregon's public forests into timber-production zones governed by mandatory harvest quotas, reduced ecological discretion, and litigation pressure to increase cutting.

HB 4105 requires the State Forester to establish a 10-year "sustainable timber harvest level" and then manage state forestlands specifically to produce that level of harvest. This is not ecological sustainability. It is a statutory mandate to meet timber-volume targets, regardless of changing forest conditions, climate realities, or community concerns.

The bill also requires the State Forester to add back any timber not harvested under previous plans, creating a ratcheting mechanism that increases harvest pressure over time.

The bill goes further by creating a new right for counties, timber interests, and revenue recipients to sue the Department of Forestry if harvest levels are not met. This would expose the state to costly litigation and force the agency into a defensive posture where avoiding lawsuits becomes more influential than science-based stewardship. It would undermine protections for 17 species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act and weaken the Department's ability to implement its Climate Change and Carbon Plan.

HB 4105 also conflicts with the Governor's Executive Order 25-26, which directs the state to preserve an additional 10% of Oregon's land and waters over the next decade. State forests are meant to lead by example in this effort. Instead, HB 4105 would override these goals with a harvest-first mandate.

The emergency clause is especially troubling. By declaring an emergency, the bill would take effect immediately and bypass the public's right to referendum. For a bill that so profoundly restructures forest governance, removing public participation is inappropriate and erodes trust. Oregon's forests belong to all Oregonians, and decisions of this magnitude should not be insulated from public review.

Ecologically, the consequences are severe. Oregon's forests are not tree farms. They are complex, living ecosystems that support clean drinking water, salmon strongholds, wildlife habitat, recreation, and a robust outdoor economy. Mature and old-growth (legacy) forests in particular are irreplaceable. They buffer extreme heat, stabilize watersheds, store

disproportionate amounts of carbon, and provide fire-resilient structure in a warming climate. Their deep roots, high moisture content, and cooling canopy create microclimates that protect both wildlife and people. Once cut, these ecological functions are lost for generations.

Forests are living systems, not timber inventories. Their value cannot be reduced to board-feet or annual harvest targets. Mature and old-growth forests hold a kind of ecological complexity that is impossible to replicate once it is lost — the layered canopy, the deep soils, the slow accumulation of carbon, the interdependent communities of plants, fungi, and wildlife. These are not features that can be replanted or quickly restored. They are the result of centuries of uninterrupted life. HB 4105 disregards this reality by treating forests as if they were tree farms, when in truth they are irreplaceable ecosystems whose integrity depends on time, continuity, and restraint.

State forests already exceed their harvest objectives under the “Greatest Permanent Value” mandate. There is no demonstrated need for a bill that forces increased cutting, undermines climate planning, and exposes the state to endless litigation.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose HB 4105 and decline to move it forward. Oregon’s forests deserve management grounded in science, ecological integrity, and public trust — not statutory harvest quotas and emergency-driven policy shifts.

Thank you for your consideration.