

Submitter: Amy Vernon

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4105

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee,

I oppose House Bill 4105. This timber industry bill prioritizes logging over all other forest values on state forests. It undermines the state forest Habitat Conservation Plan and would lead to more clearcuts, more industry lawsuits, less habitat for fish and wildlife, and less carbon storage on state public forests.

As we go into the year with far less snow melt than usual, one of my concerns with clear-cuts and tree harvesting is that our trees will not be able to recover as quickly as in the past and that we will lose more water by removing important tree cover. As someone with a permaculture design certificate and who works with native plants, I can tell you that our past logging has already created copious amounts of work to try and repair waterways, soil, and habitat. As someone who is trained to educate on invertebrate conservation I can tell you that insects and key species are already disappearing rapidly due to habitat loss and chemical usage. Our forests and watersheds are only resilient to a point.

Beyond this the bill is unnecessary. The Department of Forestry already has processes in place to establish timber harvest goals and regularly meets or exceeds those goals, often at the expense of water quality, imperiled species, and carbon storage. The economic growth cannot offset the cost of trying to restore damaged water systems, soil erosion, or loss of wildlife diversity after logging.

The bill is very likely to be expensive. It would require costly rulemaking and potentially lead to non-stop litigation the state would have to defend against at taxpayer expense. The bill creates a new, special right for the timber industry to sue the Department of Forestry to force more logging on state forests. The state can't afford unneeded legislation with an enormous fiscal impact.

I urge you to oppose this bill. Instead, I encourage this committee to focus on measures that would increase carbon storage on our state forests and safeguard public state forests and waterways for current and future generations. If we preserve and build our forests now we are more likely to be able to harvest wood later and not cause irreparable harm to our ecosystems.

Please don't let this bill pass out of committee.

Sincerely,