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Oregon Forest Industries Council

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MEASURE: HB 4002

EXHIBIT: 2

2012 SESSION H HIGHER EDUCATION

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**TESTIMONY**  
**RAY WILKESON – OREGON FOREST INDUSTRIES COUNCIL**  
**HOUSE BILL 4002 -- FORESTRY EDUCATION COUNCIL**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**FEBRUARY 9, 2012**

The OSU College of Forestry is generally viewed as the top forestry school in the nation. As such, it is a valuable asset to both the state and to the forest industry, which depends on the college for vital research and workforce needs.

Despite its stature and importance, the College of Forestry's future is far from secure. In recent years, many other prestigious forestry schools around the country have seen drastic changes in their mission and curriculum. As a result, OSU is now one of the few schools remaining that provides a formal and highly disciplined education for professional foresters and forest engineers. This core curriculum, combined with a high quality research program in forest science and wood products innovation, makes the College of Forestry essential to the future of the forestry sector of Oregon's economy.

Through endowed chairs, participation in research co-ops, and some \$3 million a year in forest products harvest tax dollars, Oregon's forest industry supports the College of Forestry with resources as well as words. And, in light of the currently difficult budget environment for higher education, the industry may very well be willing to increase its financial commitment in the future.

That would be more likely if the state was willing to create a Forestry Education Council modeled after the ETIC program, which was created by the Legislature in 1997 at the behest of Oregon's high tech industry. ETIC (Engineering and Technology Industry Council) is made up primarily of representatives of Oregon high tech companies who develop criteria that determine how dollars, both and public and private, are allocated to meet engineering education needs.

The forest industry is looking for similar assurances that investments at the OSU College of Forestry will meet its future workforce needs, and the ETIC model seems like a way to do that. That is why HB 4002 was introduced this session. The industry is not looking to alter the current functions or direction at the College of Forestry, only to ensure that those essential functions are continued into the future. Due to ongoing changes in higher education funding and governance, along with the need to hire a new Dean at the College of Forestry by mid-2012, there are concerns that these traditional core functions at the college could be at risk. A Forestry Education Council would go a long way towards securing the bedrock education infrastructure critical to graduating a skilled workforce of professional foresters and forest engineers.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 4002.