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**Testimony in Support of HB 4002
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Co-chairs Dembrow and Johnson, and members of the Committee, I am Thomas Maness, Department Head of the Department of Forest Engineering, Resources and Management at the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 4002. My department is responsible for the administration of the professional forestry education programs that are identified in the bill. We believe that the establishment of the Forestry Education Council has the potential to strengthen the partnership between our college and the companies that employ our graduates. These graduates directly benefit the State of Oregon by supporting a highly competitive forest sector that increases economic activity in forest dependent communities.

The College of Forestry is the largest and most comprehensive university program for professional forestry and forest products in the Western United States. The College is internationally recognized as a world-class center of excellence for research in forestry, watershed, ecosystem and social sciences related to the sustainable use and protection of forests and other natural resources. Although our focus today is on the College's professional forestry and renewable materials education programs, I would like to emphasize the breadth of programs offered by the College at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Our graduates span the forest sector contributing to companies, state and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations. They do so with degrees in natural resources, tourism and outdoor leadership, sustainable forest management, forest ecosystems and society, and wood science as well as the programs I will focus on today. The maintenance of a world-class comprehensive forestry school is in the state's interest because the value of Oregon's forests and forest products are the highest in the world.

Overview of the Professional Forestry and Renewable Materials Programs

The College of Forestry is home to 4 professionally accredited education programs that produce skilled graduates for landowners, forest products companies, public agencies and non-government organizations. Together these 4 programs comprise almost 300 students and produced nearly 60 work ready graduates last year.

- The *Forest Engineering* program is one of very few of its kind in the world. Its graduates are highly sought after in private industry as field engineers responsible for profitable production while protecting the environment and promoting safe operations. The program is accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology and the Society of American Foresters.
- The *Forest Operations Management* program combines professional forestry with a business minor to produce graduates targeted for management positions and new business startups. The program was recently created with industry guidance. It strongly supports forest landowners that need foresters with business acumen. It is accredited by the Society of American Foresters.
- The *Forest Management* program produces foresters for private industry, small landowners, consultants, public agencies and conservation organizations. It offers broad training in management, ecosystem science, working with the public, and forest health. It is accredited by the Society of American Foresters.
- *Renewable Materials* is a newly created education program focused on educating and training the next generation of leaders and innovators for Oregon's manufacturers and users of renewable materials, primarily wood products. Careers span the value chain from primary manufacturing to export marketing. The program maintains Society of Wood Science & Technology accreditation.

The demand for these graduates is projected to increase dramatically in the near future as a result of demographics. The College of Forestry works closely with employers to ensure that its professional programs are highly relevant and its graduates are work ready. Our close partnership with employers has been the strength of OSU's professional forestry program for decades, and we believe that this bill has potential to strengthen and formalize this relationship. We look forward to working with the new Forestry Education Council to graduate relevant and highly skilled foresters and engineers for the future.

The Unique Nature of Professional Forestry Education

Professional forestry education is field intensive, rigorous and highly specialized. The forest industry is a high-tech industry that uses the latest computer imagery, optimization, and communication equipment. Producing graduates with the skills demanded by employers requires smaller classes with dedicated and committed faculty. Private companies demand strong and specialized graduates, and they are willing to put their hard-earned dollars towards supporting this program.

The College of Forestry relies on multiple sources of funding, including state education and grant funding, research grants and contracts for which the faculty compete, revenues from the harvest tax to support research, the Forest Research Laboratory appropriation from the state's General Fund, federal funds for research, earnings from endowments, indirect cost returns from OSU research projects to the College and FRL, and small amounts of revenue from OSU College of Forestry properties.

State funds to support education are shrinking to the point where it is becoming impossible to offer professional forestry programs in the traditional way. Over the past decade our college has lost 12 academic positions and another 12 education support staff through budget reductions. For Oregon businesses there is no university program in the West where they can find graduates with a similar skill set to that delivered by Oregon State University. This is the root cause of their strong interest in supporting education – it is in their long term economic self-interest, and in the economic interest of this state.

In summary, the College of Forestry has world-class education programs that meet the needs of Oregon's forest sector. It has become increasingly difficult to continue these world class programs due to increasing enrollment pressures and decreasing revenues. We greatly appreciate that the forest owners and products industry of this state are concerned about the future of these professional education programs. We believe that the creation of the Forestry Education Council has the potential to strengthen the financial support and engagement of dedicated individuals and companies to help us continue to provide world-class programs for the Oregon Forest Sector.

I will be pleased to answer any questions.