



February 12, 2014

Oregon Senate
Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Attn: Beth Patrino, Committee Administrator
Subject: Hearing testimony on Senate Bill 1578

Dear Senator Roblan:

Sustainable Northwest strongly supports Senate Bill 1578, as amended on February 10, 2014, to make biomass an eligible green energy technology to meet the State's 1.5% investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations.

Sustainable Northwest has been a long-time supporter of biomass energy to improve the health and well-being of Oregon's communities and forest landscapes. Today we have over 20 biomass thermal energy projects across ten Oregon counties, providing space heat and hot water to schools, hospitals, airports and visitor centers. These projects save thousands of dollars in annual energy costs, reduce carbon emissions, create much needed jobs in rural communities, and keep energy dollars local for economic development. Using biomass for energy also supports Oregon's state investments in forest health. By building new markets for the byproducts of forest restoration, we create jobs in the woods, decrease the risks of extreme wildfire, and improve the quality of air and drinking water for all Oregonians.

The 1.5% requirement increases Oregon's energy independence and provides numerous economic and environmental benefits. However, exclusion of biomass as an eligible technology limits the mandate's efficiency and effectiveness to provide maximum local benefit. Sustainable Northwest supports a level playing field for renewable energy technologies, to ensure that the appropriate technology is tiered to the local resource. We also believe that public investments should be informed by the preferences of local communities and their agency partners. For many areas of the state, the best renewable energy choice may be biomass, and Senate Bill 1578 will make sure this option is on the table.

We request that you please support Senate Bill 1578, as amended, to create new green energy jobs in forest communities, keep energy dollars local, support forest stewardship, increase our energy independence, and reduce carbon emissions.

Sincerely,

John J. Audley, Ph.D.
President
Sustainable Northwest