



Board of County Commissioners

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Tammy Baney
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February 12, 2014

Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair
Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Oregon State Capitol Building
900 Court Street, NE, S-417
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Senate Bill 1578

Thank you for taking the time to consider Senate Bill 1578 which, if enacted, will encourage the use of woody biomass as a fuel for space or water heating in public buildings. The Deschutes County Board of Commissioners strongly supports this bill in the more focused form proposed in the -4 Amendment.

The bill's provision for a 1.5% allocation of total contract price on new public buildings represents a cost-effective option for encouraging the use of biomass as a heat source, in addition to solar and geothermal sources. A recent feasibility study which examined wood chip systems in comparison to natural gas concluded that, over a fifteen-year period, the cost of using biomass is competitive with the cost of natural gas. Within Deschutes County, chipping activity is common as a result of wildfire fuel reduction efforts that take place on federal land. Consequently, a steady supply of rough, clean, wood chips is readily available. Developing a market for this resource would help to both create jobs and eliminate wasteful by-products.

The time to pass legislation facilitating the use of biomass as a green energy resource is now. Many public projects within the state, including a new school in the City of Bend, are currently under design. If the relevant language included in SB 1578 is deferred to the next legislative session, we will miss these numerous opportunities to provide new energy options, create jobs, make better use of available natural resources, and reduce environmental waste.

Sincerely,

DESCHUTES COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tammy Baney
Chair

Anthony DeBone
Commissioner

Alan Unger
Commissioner

c: Members of the Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Senators Ted Ferrioli and Doug Whitsett
Representatives Jason Conger, John Huffman, Mike McLane, and Gene Whisnant

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