

MELISSA CRIBBINS, COMMISSIONER

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Oregon Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Attn: Beth Patrino, Committee Administrator

February 10, 2014

Subject: Hearing Testimony for SB 1578

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Coos County Board of Commissioners to express support for SB 1578, as amended, to make biomass an eligible green energy technology to meet the state's 1.5% investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations.

The 1.5% requirement can help us increase our energy independence and lower our carbon footprint. It can also stimulate new economic opportunity and employment in our communities. Adding biomass to the list of eligible green energy technologies will put green energy jobs within reach of many of our rural forest communities.

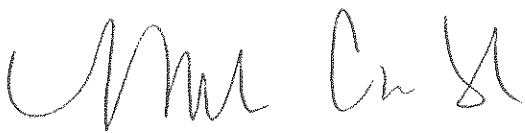
Today we have over 20 community-scale biomass thermal energy projects scattered across 10 Oregon Counties providing space heat and hot water to schools, hospitals, airports and visitor centers in small communities such as Burns, Enterprise, Days Creek, Estacada, Oakridge, Tillamook, John Day, Three Rivers, Sisters, Prairie City, Vernonia, and Bend. These projects provide numerous community benefits, including:

- Saving public agencies money on heating fuel purchase costs that can be used for teachers or other public service priorities;
- Keeping dollars expended on heating fuel local by re-circulating them in communities and creating jobs in woody biomass harvesting, processing, and delivery;
- Facilitating thinning of overly dense forest stands by creating market demand for small trees and biomass;
- Avoiding the smoke and cost of pile burning thousands of tons of thinning slash from forest restoration activities;
- Slashing CO₂ emissions by thousands of tons by switching use from fossil fuels; and
- Increasing the overall energy independence of local forest communities.

These 20+ projects demonstrate the potential of biomass thermal energy. Unfortunately, exclusion of woody biomass from the eligible 1.5% green energy technologies will stymie wide spread adoption of biomass thermal energy projects. If public agencies are required to invest part of their budget in green energy technologies but are restricted in their choices to solar and geothermal they will not be receptive to an additional biomass energy project. We will miss the best windows of opportunity for installation of renewable energy technology – when a building is first being constructed or majorly renovated.

Please support SB 1578 to help create new green energy jobs in forest communities, keep energy dollars recirculating locally, support forest stewardship, increase our energy independence, and reduce CO₂ emissions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Melissa Cribbins".

Melissa Cribbins
Chair, Coos County Board of Commissioners