



February 18, 2014

**OREGON STATE SENATE**

Re: Senate Bill 1578 A

Dear Senators:

The businesses, agencies, and non-profit organizations listed below strongly support Senate Bill 1578 A-Engrossed, to make woody biomass an eligible green technology to meet the State's 1.5% investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations.

Woody biomass energy is an important renewable technology that improves 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 and utilize Oregon's diverse renewable resources. We support a level playing field for renewable energy technologies, to ensure that the appropriate technology is tiered to the local resource. For certain areas of the state, the best renewable energy choice may be biomass, and Senate Bill 1578A, which the Oregon Department of Forestry supported in Senate committee testimony, will make sure this option is on the table.

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

Sincerely,

Association of Oregon Counties

League of Oregon Cities

Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council

Sustainable Northwest