



Oregon House Committee on Energy and Environment
Attn. Representative Vega Pederson, Committee Chair

March 12, 2015

Subject: Support for HB 2833

*Everywhere
Central Oregon
Works*

Dear Chair Vega Pederson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) to express support for HB 2833, amending ORS 279C.527 to make biomass an eligible green energy technology to meet the state's 1.5% investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations.

COIC is a regional council of governments serving the communities of Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties. We developed, and continue to support, various collaborative efforts to restore local forests. These efforts include opportunities to utilize the byproducts of forest restoration – usually very small diameter woody biomass material that typically is not utilized in the local economy. COIC has also actively supported the development of other renewable technologies – such as sun, wind, and microhydro – in Central Oregon, and believe that biomass must be included in conversations about region and state-appropriate sustainable community development. Last year our Board of Directors, including local elected officials from the three counties and eight cities of Central Oregon and representatives from the private sector, unanimously supported a previous version of this bill.

Oregon is a state rich with diverse natural resources. While some communities are well suited to developing solar energy, others have ample access to geothermal resources, while still others are surrounded by available biomass material. HB 2833 aligns the State with a more equitable stance on renewable energies, and empowers communities to choose the renewable energy that is best suited to their unique conditions. Oregon's rural communities are particularly poised to take advantage of the HB 2833 amendment, with many opportunities to replace expensive and imported fossil fuel with locally sourced biomass material.

Biomass energy comes in many shapes and forms, from liquid fuels and combined heat and power facilities to small residential and commercial thermal boilers. Unfortunately biomass energy is often taken out of context and painted with a broad brush, despite the many differences between these end uses and technologies. HB 2833 encourages the simplest and most readily acceptable forms of biomass energy – small thermal boilers and combined heat and power facilities scaled to match the facility's energy needs. Such systems use state of the art, efficient and clean technologies, much like the vast number of biomass energy systems installed across New England and many European countries.

Furthermore, biomass is unique among renewable energy technologies for its inherent connection to land management. There is wide agreement that Oregon's forests are degraded and in need of active restoration to reduce the risk of high-severity fire events. Developing markets for the biomass material

produced as a byproduct of such restoration activities is crucial to improving both forest health, and conditions of rural communities seeking to create a new natural resource economy. Biomass sourced from local forests and used to heat institutional buildings means money that would have been sent elsewhere to pay for fossil fuels is instead circulated in the local economy, supporting improved services and natural resource-related jobs.

Developing a sustainable energy future requires investment and leadership. Public buildings offer the perfect venue for demonstrating renewable energy technologies such as solar, geothermal and biomass. Like all investments in a sustainable future, biomass energy costs more than fossil fuel technology up front, but pays for itself over time. Taking a long-term perspective in uncertain times is difficult for many private sector businesses that often struggle to plan for the next quarter, much less the next decade, so leadership for a sustainable future must start with the public sector.

Please support HB 2833 to help create new jobs in forested communities, keep energy dollars circulating locally, support forest stewardship, increase our energy independence, and reduce our CO₂ emissions. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Andrew Spreadborough
Executive Director