



April 3, 2017

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Attn: Beth Patrino, LPRO Analyst; Shelley Raszka, Committee Assistant
Subject: Hearing testimony on Senate Bill 634

Dear Chair Dembrow and Vice-Chair Olsen,

Sustainable Northwest supports Senate Bill 634, 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 10 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. They are also located predominantly in public facilities outside of natural gas territory, where alternative fuel sources often consist of volatile fossil fuel options. Using biomass for energy also supports Oregon's investments in forest health. By building new markets for the byproducts of forest management and 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 public partners. For many areas of the state, the best renewable energy choice may be biomass, and Senate Bill 634 will make sure this option is on the table. The legislation has no fiscal impact, establishes parity in renewable energy policy, and encourages competition in energy selection, regardless of technology type or pathway.

We request that you please support Senate Bill 634, to keep energy dollars local, support forest stewardship, increase our energy independence, and reduce carbon emissions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dylan Kruse".

Dylan Kruse
Policy Director
Sustainable Northwest