

Written Testimony Regarding S.B. 198
For a Public Hearing of the
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
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Cassandra Moseley, Research Professor and Associate Vice President for Research
University of Oregon
S.B. 202 Task Force Member

Chairman Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

As a member of the S.B. 202 Task Force on Independent Science Reviews for Natural Resources in the State of Oregon, I am writing to provide comments on S.B. 198, a bill that would create an Oregon Independent Science Review Board. This bill as drafted aligns well with the recommendations of the Task Force. With this testimony, I would like to offer some recommendations to strengthen the legislation to ensure that the Board is able to successfully conduct independent scientific review. My comments are consistent with the recommendations of the Task Force, which I support.

The Task Force recommended that Oregon develop an independent scientific review process to address complex multi-disciplinary scientific questions relevant to lawmakers, managers, and stakeholders. Given the contentious nature of natural resource policy and management, independent scientific reviews can contribute important objective information and help to clarify conflicts that are factual in nature. However, to succeed, the review process must maintain its independence and not become captured by particular interests or be deployed as a strategy to avoid making difficult political decisions. To strengthen the independence of the Board, I offer the following recommendations in line with Task Force's overall recommendations:

- It is important that the Governor appoint the board members and that there is a process for removing board members who are not actively participating. However, if board members were serving at the pleasure of the Governor and could be removed at any time by the Governor, it could create a chilling effect on the Board's work if scientific findings were to run counter to a political position of the Governor or powerful stakeholders. I recommend modifying the bill so that board members are subject to removal for non-participation through a simple majority vote of a quorum of the Board.
- Similarly, though the Governor should appoint the Administrator, I recommend changing the bill so that the Administrator serves at the pleasure of the Board rather than the Governor to insulate the Administrator and the Secretariat they oversee from political influence.
- Similar to S.B. 202, I recommend adding a process whereby the Senior Research Officers (i.e. vice presidents for research) at Oregon State University, University of Oregon, and Portland State University provide board nominations to the Governor. This process would identify for the Governor potential board members with critical

expertise that may be otherwise unknown to the Governor and ensure buy-in from universities for faculty participation on the Board. As was the case with S.B. 202, I would anticipate that the Governor would also appoint people who are not nominated by the research vice presidents.

- The Oregon Independent Scientific Review Board needs adequate funding to undertake robust, timely reviews. Poorly funded processes risk creating slow-moving reviews that could be used a delay tactic in politically contentious decision-making.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about my testimony.