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Dear Chairman Helm and Committee Members,

Re: Why we oppose the unreasonable HB 2656

We wish to submit our testimony for the hearing scheduled March 12, 2019 before the House Committee on Energy and Environment that will consider HB 2656. Whitewater Forests, our family business will be greatly harmed if this becomes law. Members of our family have derived their living from Oregon's growing forests for over sixty years. With considerable pride and expertise we sustainably grow and harvest timber from our lands in Lane and Douglas Counties. Our daily work contributes to the local economy, forest health, fish and wildlife habitat and water quality. HB 2656 seeks to criminalize responsible forest harvesting, building of access roads and use of forest chemicals. The restrictions of this bill will make forest operations growing, tending and harvesting our private forests virtually impossible. HB 2656 endangers the options of our grandchildren to continue our family heritage of providing wood products for citizen's needs.

HB 2656 is a thinly veiled "wish list" of "urban centric mindset" activist groups who would like to see Oregon's forest industry dismantled and the lands that we actively manage for timber production become a playground for those who dictate policy from their metro offices. This extreme bill introduced under the pretense of a "safe waters act" only further erodes rural citizen's trust in our legislature that should represent all Oregonians. There appears to be no understanding of the harm these unnecessary draconian rules would inflict on people, forests and our economy. One of the very foundational principles of our country is private land ownership and the right to benefit from labor of your hand. This legislation would be a confiscation of our family's private property rights to manage forests that we purchased to produce income.

The Oregon Forest Practices Act has strictly regulated private forest operations for nearly fifty-years. One of the strengths of the Act has been the evolution of law with the many policy changes over the years to reflect changes in forest science. Oregon's Department of Forestry has highly qualified, professional Stewardship Foresters who work closely with forest operators to assure strong resource protection measures are followed. There is no scientific evidence to justify the punitive changes to proven methods that would be forced on Oregon's forest owners through HB 2656. For example the Eugene Water and Electric Board cites a recent DEQ watershed study on the McKenzie River, demonstrating the fine quality, purity and lack of contaminants in water flowing from managed forests.

Our family, as a part of the forest products industry, is proud to produce carbon neutral products that are needed by our society. Here in Oregon over three-quarters of the wood products produced come from private forests. Those who choose city life must rely on people like us to provide their food and shelter. HB 2656 devalues the significant contribution we make to society and shortsightedly denies the importance of local and sustainable forest products.

We are shocked and dismayed at the increasingly hostile anti-forestry agenda of this legislature. HB 2656 is terrible legislation and is so outrageous it should never have received a hearing.

Sincerely,

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