

9 March 2019

Rep. Anna Williams

900 Court St. N.E., H-377

Salem OR 97301

Re: Opposition to House Bill 2656

Dear Representative Williams;

We request that our letter be entered in the public record.

Thank you for your recent town hall visit to Sandy, Oregon to meet with your constituents, as this is one of the purest forms of democracy in action. We hope you will continue to interact and listen to your constituents in the future.

We are writing in opposition to HB 2656 as this bill runs directly against the goals of Oregon's Forest Practices Act and places restrictions of an unprecedented nature on good forestry management. The Forestry Practices Act specifically states:

"Forests provide environmental, social and economic benefits that reach beyond their boundaries. They provide jobs, products and tax revenues that result in healthy communities.... (and) helps sustain these values in a socially accountable manner."

We should also add that the Clackamas River Basin Council (of which I, William, am a member, but do not here officially represent) see in their mission statement the watershed as a place to "... *foster partnerships for clean water and to improve fish and wildlife habitat and the quality of life for those who live, work and recreate in the watershed.*" As a family, my wife and I are both obviously concerned with maintaining watershed health. However, nearly **all** small and large woodland owners west of the Cascades are in watersheds. In reality this bill would effectively shut down nearly all forest operations in Oregon. Indeed, HB 2656 specifically punishes woodland owners who actively manage forests for water health, as well as wildfire prevention, wildlife, recreation, and general environmental health, as we do. It should also be noted that some 86% of acreage burned in Oregon fires was Federal forestland, which was and is, overstocked, inaccessible and diseased, and, unfortunately, poorly managed. These mostly *unmanaged* forestlands burned, caused millions of tons of air pollution impacting the health of all Oregonians. Small woodlot owners instead sequester carbon by actively managing their forestland to prevent such fire and pollution. Road building, limbing, weed and pest control, thinning and machinery

operations are all part and parcel of the active management which HB 2656 would curtail. Overall forest health would certainly suffer and fires would likely increase.

Further, HB 2656 would have very negative financial impacts on "Mom and Pop" operations whose income from tree harvests provide many with retirement income, as well as helping pay their taxes. Since Oregon tax laws require forestland be used at the highest and best use, in many cases woodland owners would no longer be permitted to use our special tax assessments. Removing the special assessment would result in taxing standing timber. Taxes would in turn skyrocket, driving many to sell, and in many cases preventing them from passing their land on to family. The loss of this income could also force sales of forest land for conversion to other non-forest operations, such as food crop farming or, wherever possible, real estate divisions, And again, this would be counter to the intentions of the bill.

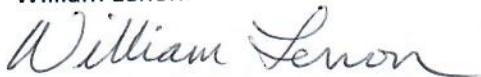
My wife and I are small woodland owners of about 10 acres less than two miles from Eagle Creek. We actively manage our forest to maintain its environmental health, as well as protect our creek, and all of our flora and fauna. We do so not so much for profit, but to benefit the entire environment in which we live. Indeed we recently thinned our forest more for its health than to make the relatively small amount of profit we gained by doing so. However, we are certainly not opposed to others who grow and harvest for profit, yet manage for forest health as well. If woodland owners such as we are not allowed to construct roads in our forests and cannot responsibly use *minimal* amounts of pesticides for weed control around seedlings needing sunlight, fire could run rampant through our forest. *Virtually every small woodland owner I know of is as concerned about fire prevention, and forest and environmental health as we are.* HB 2656 makes me fearful of its un-scientific, well-intentioned ideas and its unintended consequences. **It is not based on good forestry science.** Oregon's Forest Protection act is based on good science and should be the guiding principle in any forest related legislation. And, for this reason alone, HB 2656 is indeed bad legislation.

We are sure others will write you concerning vital issues which we have not, in the interest of brevity, elaborated upon. In summation, we urge you to pay attention to good forestry science, not uninformed, but well intentioned proposals.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to talking with you in the future.

Sincerely,

William Lenon



Georgia Lenon

