

April 16, 2018

Joint Committee on Transportation

Co-Chair Lee Beyer

Co-Chair Caddy McKeown

Members of the Committee

RE: Support for HB 2015 - Equal Access to Roads Act

My name is Sarah Deumling and I am a family forestland owner and business owner in Polk County. I am addressing this committee from two perspectives: as a human being and citizen of Oregon and as a member of the timber industry and a small business owner.

From the first perspective I believe that in today's world the right to drive legally and safely is basic to being a participating member of a community, basic to human dignity. Family members need to go to the doctor, parents are requested to attend parent teacher conferences, a father or mother need to get to work to support their family, someone needs to buy groceries. Most of these things for most folks require driving. There are places in inner cities where it is possible without a car but many many people do not live in inner cities with good public transit systems. I know hard working people of great integrity and community service who live in the shadows created by being afraid to drive anywhere without a valid license. Even those among us who are anti-immigrant should be able to come up with better ways to solve the immigration problem than denying competent a drivers license.

As a business owner and member of the timber industry I want to tell you that the inability to drive legally on the part of many workers has changed our industry over the past years. Workers who cannot get a valid license in Oregon can go to Washington where there are similar jobs and a license is no problem. There is a severe shortage of forest workers due to the fact that life here in the shadows is not attractive. Contractors who once had several large crews cutting brush, planting trees, spraying and doing pre-commercial thinning - things that keep our forests healthy, are now down to one small crew and need to keep raising wages higher and higher to compete with other contractors for the remaining folks willing to work these jobs. This makes it ever more expensive for those of us trying to manage our forests responsibly and also very difficult to find workers at all for someone without long standing connections. If this trend continues the time may soon come that we cannot afford to manage sustainably and we will be forced to do things that are not good for the climate, the ecosystems, our resources and the economy.

Please pass HB 2015. It will be good for Oregon.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Deumling

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