

February 2, 2021

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

Testimony in opposition of HB 2357

Submitted by: Lisa Keown, Career Technical Education/College Now Natural Resource Instructor, Envirothon Advisor, and Future Natural Resource Leader Adviser.

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am here today to express opposition of HB 2357, which eliminates the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), and its funding by re-directing the portion of the Forest Products Harvest Tax that funds OFRI to the Oregon Department of Forestry. I have been involved in education and natural resources for the entirety of my career and five years ago, took a position as a College Now/CTE natural resource instructor at Crook County High School. I can say without hesitation that OFRI has made me a better instructor and has substantially enriched the education and experiences of students in the Natural Resource Program.

Hands-on real world experiences are what make education relevant and engaging to students. However, this style of teaching takes time and resources school districts often cannot provide. OFRI is able to bridge this gap and make this type of learning possible by providing substitute reimbursement and travel expenses for forestry related excursions. My students have directly benefited from this by being able to partake in field trips to places such as the Oregon Logging Conference, Hopkins Demonstration Forest, and Oregon State University. Many of my students are from low-income families and would not be able to afford to travel to see forest and ecosystems on the West side of the Cascades if it were not for OFRI's support. These experiences are invaluable and open students' eyes to the importance of healthy forests and sustainable forest practices. On these trips, my students learn about more than forestry, they learn about the diversity of Oregon and how important our natural resources are to Oregonians' way of life.

In addition to enhancing my students' education, OFRI has provided professional development opportunities that have made me a much better teacher. I have had the opportunity to learn directly from professionals in the natural resources fields and collaborate with other natural resource teachers on best practices. They also provide an array of curriculum that has helped me address and teach the topics covered in the professional development.

I believe that natural resource instruction is vital in today's world. Our youth will be tasked with making crucial decisions regarding natural resources and forestry in the future and the solid foundation that OFRI provides will enable them to do this with knowledge and perspective. For these reasons and many more, please oppose HB 2357.

Lisa Keown