

Chair Witt, co-chairs, committee members, thank you for your patience and fortitude Tuesday, March 2, during the hearings on various bills, including HB 2357. As time expired before I could testify, below is my oral testimony.

My name is Paul Barnum. I served as the executive director of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute for 10 years. I am opposed to HB 2357

I've submitted written testimony that describes the work of OFRI over the past 30 years –

- its governance as a public agency and its similarity to other commodity commissions
- the importance of public, K-12 and landowner education
- the economic importance of the forest sector, especially to rural areas
- the fact that OFRI has neither requested nor received any General Fund monies

Of course, I am aware of last year's negative press coverage of OFRI. I take the criticism very seriously. But let's be honest. If the Legislature eliminated every state agency and department criticized by the Oregonian, there would be far fewer state agencies.

The Secretary of State is conducting an audit of OFRI. It's due later this year. I urge this committee to not rush to judgment.

Now is not the time to change a model that for three decades has served the best interests of the public, forest landowners, the state and its forests.

Thank you.

Paul Barnum
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