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Oregon House on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Re: Testimony on HB 2357 to the Oregon House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Dear Chair Witt and members of the Committee:

I would like to urge you to not defund or otherwise eliminate the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), such as contemplated in HB 2357.

In fairness to OFRI and all who value OFRI's work, I think it is important that you request their appearance on this issue in front of the Committee. Unless specifically invited, they are unable to respond to the damaging allegations levied on them by the proponents of the bill.

Further, public (non-legislator) testimony during the March 2, 2021 hearing was limited to one minute each with one exception. A panel of proponents organized by Oregon Wild was allowed to testify for 20 minutes. It would be unfair to not allow a panel of opponents equal time to present their arguments, especially in light of the fact that the hearing was concluded before many others were allowed to testify.

I think it is important to understand that **OFRI does not receive any financial support from Oregon's General Fund**. Funding for OFRI, similar to commodity commissions for other agricultural crops, comes from those that harvest the crop. Funding for OFRI only comes from taxes levied on those that harvest timber in Oregon.

Education is OFRI's mission, and unlike the other 22 Oregon commodity commissions and the Oregon Wine Board, OFRI is not allowed to lobby. Oregon's forest sector remains critically important to Oregon's economy, environment, and especially rural communities. OFRI's work is vitally important to helping bridge the urban-rural divide and in helping landowners better manage their forests.

Science provides the foundation for Oregon's forest practice laws. Similarly, OFRI's educational efforts are widely reviewed and are founded on sound science. Laws that arrogantly prescribe practices that are not scientifically supported, and that could actually be detrimental to achieving desired outcomes, may be accepted in neighboring states, but should not be accepted in Oregon. Our state motto says, "she flies with her own wings" for a reason. Since the first laws were adopted 80 years ago, Oregon's forest practice laws have continuously evolved as the body of science has informed the evolution. OFRI has played an important role in informing as well as educating through this evolution.

Forest owners invest for the long term and face many, many risks such as fire, weather, insects, disease, and markets over the decades it takes the investment in their crop to mature. Political risk is also very real and can factor into a landowner's decisions regarding the use of their land. Deforestation does not occur if a landowner replants following timber harvest, but deforestation does occur if that landowner converts the land to another use such as a vineyard. OFRI's educational programs help forest owners keep forest land as forest land.

I write to you on this issue as one who served on the OFRI board of directors for six years, three of those as board chair. Professionally, I am a Certified Forester with over 40 years as a professional forester and I currently serve as CEO of Giustina Resources, a company that is responsible for family-owned forest land that has been sustainably managed for over 100 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Peter Sikora
Giustina Resources