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March 5, 2021

VIA U.S. ELECTRONIC MAIL REP.KENHELM@STATE.OR.US ;
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Chair Helm
Vice Chair Owens
Vice Chair Reardon
Members of the House Committee on Water
900 Court St. NE, H-490
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 3221, the Oregon Renewable Options Program

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chair Owens, Vice Chair Reardon & Members of the Committee:

Wellons is writing in support of HB 3221, a bill that supports the development of clean, affordable renewable power in Oregon.

For over 50 years, Wellons has been a leader in providing biomass-fired energy systems, lumber dry kilns, and related products and services to the forest products and industrial power industries. Wellons is currently working with the City of Prineville and Crook County on a planned 20-megawatt biomass power plant – the Prineville Renewable Energy Project (PREP). The project would use woody materials created through sustainable forestry work, such as restoration, thinning and fuel hazard reduction activities. Using this biomass for energy can provide environmental, economic, and social benefits while creating more resilient forest conditions. This can reduce the amount and severity of wildfires, damages to life, property and natural resources, air quality and public health impacts from wildfire smoke, and fire suppression costs.

There are many barriers to the development of local renewable energy projects, including the low available rates for electricity sold on the wholesale markets. Without higher power rates, the proposed biomass facility will not be financially viable. HB 3221 would create a way for the energy and environmental benefits of the project to be valued by the communities in Central Oregon, making the higher power rates the facility needs possible.

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PREP would utilize biomass to generate clean, baseload energy and provide significant benefit to watersheds by improving the quantity of water available and enhancing ecosystems with improved soil and water quality. HB 3221 means that a value can be put on these and other co-benefits, including local energy and economic development, increased resilience of electricity service to extreme events, and investments in healthy forest ecosystems.

We respectfully request your support of HB 3221.

Sincerely,



Rob Broberg
VP of Business Development
Wellons Group, Inc.