



February 10, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Finance & Revenue
FR: Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)
RE: SB 312

OSPIRG is a statewide, citizen-based organization representing thousands of Oregonians.

OSPIRG supports SB 312.

We have a right to know how our tax money is being spent, and no company should be able to game the tax system to avoid paying what it legitimately owes. Too many multi-state and multinational corporations are able to use accounting tricks to avoid paying their share, leaving individuals and small businesses to bear the brunt of the tax burden.

While there are many examples of tax avoidance, OSPIRG research estimates that just one kind, the abuse of offshore tax havens, leads to \$175 million in lost tax revenue to the state of Oregon each year. Importantly, this is just an estimate because the information required to fully assess the impact of avoidance through offshore tax havens is not public. Having access to taxes paid in Oregon by multinational companies would better help us understand this issue and better inform policy making in the future.

It is also critically important that tax information be readily available to the public in the most easily-accessible format possible and not require multiple public records requests or other burdens to access. OSPIRG has experience with how difficult it can be to gain access to tax information that is supposed to be available to the public. Several years ago, while researching the effectiveness of enterprise zones at creating the jobs they were intended to create, we filed public records requests that were initially denied on "trade secrets" grounds. While we were ultimately successful after an appeal to the Attorney General, this illustrates how burdensome it can be to access information that is supposed to be public. A similar process for corporate tax information would most certainly prevent most regular Oregonians from truly having access to such information.

When large corporations are able to use accounting gimmicks to avoid paying their taxes, or tax breaks and incentives are not achieving their intended purpose, everyone suffers, either through reduced services, higher taxes, or both.

I urge this committee to support SB 312.