

May 10, 2021

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Pham and Reschke, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2357A.

My name is Paul Barnum. I served as executive director of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute from 2008 to 2018. I oppose HB 2357A.

It's not an understatement to say that forest practices in Oregon are controversial. OFRI does not set forest practices. It does not advocate for or against laws to change forest practices. Those who want to change the state's forest practice laws or encourage other forestry methods have multiple avenues to open to them. The Legislature should not bow to outside pressure and eviscerate the agency charged with communicating and educating about the state's Oregon Forest Practices Act.

For 30 years, OFRI has proved its effectiveness as a forestry education agency. Landowner funds have been well-managed and used for the purposes set by the Legislature in 1991. Public oversight is well-defined. OFRI educational materials are factual and based on science-based forestry practices taught at Oregon State University and governed by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

OFRI'S MISSION COVERS ALL FOREST RESOURCES as it engages Oregonians about the benefits we need and enjoy: timber, water, fish and wildlife habitat, carbon capture, recreation, beauty, and inspiration.

OFRI's explains contemporary forest management to the general public, including K-12 audiences, and help forest landowners meet and exceed the requirements of the Oregon Forest Practices Act. To the maximum extent possible, OFRI presents an unbiased view of forest management. It does so by relying on the expertise of foresters, educators and scientists to review its educational materials.

K-12 EDUCATION IS A VITAL ASPECT OF OFRI'S WORK. In addition to its own publications, videos and dedicated website for teachers, OFRI provides financial support for the Oregon Natural Resources Education Program, Forests Today & Forever and the Rediscovery Forest at the Oregon Garden.

FOREST LANDOWNERS NEED EDUCATION, especially the estimated rural 60,000 family forestland owners who make up roughly one-third of private forestland ownership.

OFRI IS INNOVATIVE. In 2015, OFRI received a \$250,000 grant from the USDA's Wood Innovation Program to educate architects, engineers, builders and the general public about the benefits of building with cross-laminated timber – a sustainable and climate-friendly building material.

THE LEGISLATURE CREATED OFRI IN 1991. OFRI's legislation is modeled after statutes that govern Oregon's nearly two dozen grower-supported agricultural commodity commissions. The state's welfare, the Legislature found, relies on the health and vigor of the forest sector. That is still the case. It's vital that the state's increasingly urban populace understand and appreciate the contribution of Oregon's mostly rural forest sector to the state's economy, environment and future well-being.

OFRI IS GOVERNED BY VOLUNTEERS. Membership is diverse and includes small, medium and large landowners. It includes a public representative appointed by the Legislature as well as the dean of the OSU College of Forestry. A Department of Forestry liaison assists the board. All of OFRI's materials are reviewed by these public agencies as well as other organizations, including small woodland owners.

THE NEED FOR EDUCATION about Oregon's forests, sustainable forest management and forest products is as great as ever. OFRI is regarded by its key audiences as a credible clearinghouse of information about Oregon's forests – public and private, large and small. Now is not the time to change a model that is serving the best interests of the public, landowners, the state and its forests.

Respectfully, I urge you not to pass HB 2357A out of committee.

Sincerely,

Paul F. Barnum
Beaverton, OR 97006