

Dear Chair Witt, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson and Committee Members,

We wish to express our strong opposition to HB 2357, a bill specifically targeting dismemberment of The Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI). During 2019 our family was recognized as the outstanding Oregon State Tree Farmers. We have been nominated as candidates for the award of National Outstanding Tree Farmer this year. Our 151 forested acres in Lane and Douglas Counties are certified by the Oregon and American Tree Farm System, America's largest sustainable woodland program. We have been identified for our contribution to Oregon's clean water and air, wildlife habitat and sustainable wood supply. Three generations of our family are actively involved in the care of these lands. Resource protection, maintaining forest health, productivity and conserving these values for future generations is of utmost importance to our family.

Since 1991 The Oregon Forest Resources Institute has played a vital role in fostering public awareness through scientific research, public workshops on forest management, K-12 forest education programs, promotion of best practices on Oregon's forests.

This exceptional program does not receive general fund tax money; revenue to operate OFRI comes from a portion of the Forest Products Harvest Tax levied on forest landowners like ourselves.

Proponents of HB 2357 wish to defund OFRI and eliminate this effective organization. In turn they propose to place these Harvest Tax Dollars into an ill-defined slush fund. Elimination of OFRI's educational contribution and valuable work focusing on sustainable care and management of Oregon's forests is the wrong path during these times of concerns over forest health and ever-present danger from wildfire.

Nearly one-half of Oregon is forested, sensible public discourse on the future of our forests benefits all Oregonians. Our family urges you to strongly oppose HB 2357.

Sincerely,

Gordon and Gail Culbertson
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