

To: The Legislature, State of Oregon

Attn: Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Re: Public Comment, HB 5010

From: John L. Lawes III, RG, CEG

Having practiced as a registered professional geologist and certified engineering geologist in the state of Oregon for the previous 28 years when I heard that the 2021 legislative session proposed to zero the funding for the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) I thought that someone in State government was indulging in a joke in very poor taste.

In a state that is *still* grossly underprepared for the coming M8-M9 earthquake, that still is encumbered with dozens of seismically unsafe bridges, lifelines, and unreinforced masonry buildings, that has repeatedly underfunded and ignored these potential hazards to life and property, to eliminate the one agency in the State that has actually tried and is still trying to prevent the disaster the legislature has been ignoring for decades?

Surely no one could possibly be *that* foolish.

I recognize the fiscal difficulty that the State of Oregon finds itself in, between the pandemic and associated costs and declines in revenue, and the utter incompetence of the federal government's response - such as it was - over the past year, and the desperate search for budgetary savings.

But consider.

In DOGAMI the State has a reserve of seismic geology and engineering geology second to none in the Northwest; gifted scientists with a deep well of experience in the state and region, whose insight and guidance are essential for preparing for, dealing with, and will be essential to recover from the coming disastrous Cascadia earthquake among other natural hazards such as the landslides that recently cost yet another life in the Dodson debris flow.

Once that reserve of knowledge is scattered, that well drained, to refill it – if even possible – will be vastly more costly and difficult than the 3-odd million needed to maintain it. And without that knowledge the unknown, unexplored, unmitigated hazards will not go away. They will, instead, accumulate with every passing day. We just won't know that...until they make their presence known in the most unpleasant of ways.

When you are hungry it is tempting to sell your clothing for food.

But then you find yourself naked before the storm.

Reconsider.

The cost of keeping this agency, relative to the state budget, is small.

The cost of throwing it away might be more than We the People of Oregon are willing to pay.