

Dear chair and members of the committee,

I am writing to encourage you to vote no on HB 2357. My husband and I live on the Tillamook coast and we are native Oregonians. He is a forester for Stimson Lumber Company and I am a special education teacher in the district. OFRI is an essential organization that provides education on forestry to the public and school aged children.

Misinformation about forestry is a big reason for the polarization around issues of forestry. Less than 1% of the population work in forestry, so it is no wonder that people are ignorant of its practices. People fear what they don't understand, especially when environmental activists are ready to spread misinformation to further their mission. In order to have productive conversations about forestry, the public needs to be educated about forestry practices.

Without OFRI's education and outreach, I fear that the voice of forestry will go silent, leaving the public with an incredibly one-sided view of the industry from people that do not actually work in the woods. I am concerned that with such a one-sided view of forestry, public policy will be increasingly crafted against timber, which of course would affect my husband's job that he loves so much, and also supports our growing family.

Eliminating OFRI is very poor timing coming off the heels of the Memorandum of Understanding between Timber and Environmentalist groups. This was to be a step forward away from the timber wars that have plagued our history for decades. This bill is just re-opening the wound. Also, OFRI is currently going through an audit, so let's please wait until we have all the facts before slashing it.

Finally, as a teacher, I know that OFRI provides many educational opportunities and field trips. It would be a shame to get rid of this, especially in a time when education has suffered so much due to COVID.

Thank you for hearing my concerns.

Sincerely,
Ellie Hilger
Tillamook County