

Dear Chairman Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman & Owens, and all committee members:

My name is Bonny Glendenning. I'm an Environmental Educator for Port Blakely, a fifth-generation family-owned sustainable forestry company in the Pacific Northwest. I am writing in opposition to HB 3019, and any bill that seeks to defund or eliminate the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI).

OFRI, our state's forestry commodity commission, provides all of the citizens of Oregon with reliable, science-based education. The capacity that this small organization has built, within their limited budget, over the last 30 years will not be duplicated by any other agency. It is vitally important for all Oregonians to understand the value of the forests that cover nearly ½ of our beautiful state.

Ecosystem services like wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and watershed functions are not intuitive, especially to new Oregonians. Without OFRI to help educate the general public about forests, who will pass this knowledge to citizen stakeholders?

Who will tell them about the economic benefits of forestry; the 60,000+ jobs the industry provides, the accomplishment of becoming the #1 producer in the nation in several important durable wood building materials? The fact that these resources are renewable, sequester and store carbon, and are a vital part of our state's economy will not be known without OFRI's help spreading the word.

We are just starting to learn more about the social/emotional benefits of spending time in the woods. Will all Oregonians value forestland, and the recreational opportunities it provides? Or will our incoming citizens and new voters be oblivious to the privilege of living in a state with so many trees? Will that lack of knowledge change the future landscape of the Oregon we love?

Port Blakely has provided an Environmental Education program at no cost to schools in Washington and Oregon for nearly 30 years. For the last 14 years, OFRI has partnered with us to provide student transportation to forest field trips in Molalla. Last year, we welcomed our 100,000th visitor to the sustainable forestry program. Young Oregonians will miss countless opportunities to learn the value of our forests, if HB 3019 passes.

Seven years ago, I gave a speech. It wasn't motivated by politics or money; it was simply an expression of gratitude for OFRI... an acknowledgement of all the ways the organization helps educate Oregonians about forests. My speech "*5 Ways That OFRI Gives Us a Hand*" is below, and it details just a few of the services the organization provides. These resources will be lost if OFRI is defunded.

1. Free science-based teaching materials, teaching tools, manuals, and videos

I constantly refer to OFRI's latest publications for statistics, fact-based teaching, and details about Oregon's Forest Practices Act. OFRI works directly with scientists and educators to ensure materials reflect current research and grade-level educational requirements. The packets I send

home with teachers after each field trip are stuffed with their science-based materials and Forest Fact Break videos for students. Recently, our company hired a brand-new Environmental Educator. The first thing I did is order OFRI materials to give her the background knowledge she needs, to accurately teach about forestry. As a small forestland owner myself, who has recently passed the torch to the next generation, I constantly point our young family members OFRI's resources for landowners. The Private Forest Accord will bring big changes Oregon's Forest Practice Laws. Without support from a commodity commission, small family forest owners will struggle to understand the complex changes.

2. Transportation to forest and natural resource field trips

Bussing classes to and from field trips is one of the largest expenses teachers encounter when searching for opportunities for their students. In the field of education, we know providing expanded learning environments is a best practice, but the fact that there is no money for field trips is a barrier for most schools, especially the large number of Title 1 classes we serve. Hundreds of times, I have heard 10 and 11-year-old students say, "I've never been in a forest before". It breaks my heart. And many of these opportunities, throughout the state, are now at risk because OFRI may not be able to pay for bussing. Nearly ½ of our state is covered in trees. How will the next generation learn about the value of these woodlands -- environmental, economic, and recreational -- if these programs are no longer available?

3. Improving education through networking, and teacher professional development

Another exceptional service that OFRI provides is their organization and facilitation of the Forestry Educators Networking Group. We are a network of professional educators from around the state, who come together to collaborate on programing, improved practices, and the newest methods to incorporate more state and science standards. OFRI also supports the Oregon Natural Resources Education Program, housed at OSU, which provides teachers with the knowledge and skills to confidently teach students about nature. Over the last 16 years, I have continuously evaluated and improved our program with tools from both resources.

4. A base of forestry knowledge

I have observed OFRI's Environmental Ed programs at the Oregon Garden firsthand. Their educators are of the highest quality, and we have collaborated to improve both of our programs by sharing techniques. OFRI's science-based high school curriculum is used in over 40 CTE (Career Technical Education) accreditation programs around the state. 6 community college programs partner with OFRI. I've attended multiple forest health and wildfire presentations for adults, either facilitated by or featuring OFRI staff. The capacity of this small 8-person organization will not be duplicated elsewhere, and the funding proposed by HB 3019 will not be enough to support staff or programs.

5. Oregon's economy, forestry is one of our core economic strengths

In 2014, Port Blakely offered to host one of the largest forestry "In the Woods" shows on the West Coast. The goal was to teach Oregonians everything we could about sustainable forestry in Oregon, from planting to harvest, and everything in between. I had never attended a show, and didn't know where to begin, but Julie from OFRI was there to advise. It was her 4th show,

and a huge endeavor. Together we brought 2500 teachers, students, and parents into the woods in 2 days, each group guided by volunteer forestry professionals from across the state, (recruited by OFRI). More than 2500 Oregonians learned about wildlife, ecology, forest fires, harvest technology, and the 60,000 jobs the forest sector provides to Oregonians. Without OFRI's coordination of volunteers, help with presenters, experience with trade shows and conferences, and bus transportation reimbursements, this educational opportunity would not have been possible.

Again, I want to emphasize that opportunities for average citizens to learn about one of the state's largest industries are limited. The Oregon Legislature created OFRI in 1991 to educate the public and landowners about forest practices. Landowners understand the value of forestland and rely heavily on OFRI for technical training and educational materials. But the average citizen also needs to be educated! This mission is currently being accomplished by OFRI which is funded ***exclusively by a timber harvest tax that forestland owners have voluntarily imposed on themselves to fulfill this need.*** Please don't redirect these funds.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony! Given the value OFRI brings to all Oregonians, I am amazed by what their 8-person staff can accomplish with their current budget of roughly 4 million. HB 3019 seeks to reduce their budget to 1/3 of its current level, roughly 1.3 million. Too little for staff, too little for programming, and too little to accomplish the mission of educating Oregon citizens about the critical roles forests fulfill.

Please oppose defunding OFRI through HB 3019. I hope you can see how Oregon's landscape will change, and that future Oregonians will suffer the consequences, if this bill passes.

One value I know we can all agree upon is that we love forests. Children and adults learn the value and importance of all forests: public, private, and tribal, through education. If we want future generations to cherish what is special about Oregon, and to appreciate the fact that trees cover almost ½ of our state, they must be given opportunities to learn about forests!

Sincerely,

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