

Testimony-Catherine Thomasson, MD
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Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, members of the Committee, for the record my name is Dr. Catherine Thomasson. I am representing the views of the Environmental Caucus of the Oregon State Democrats.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 530. As a physician, I am gravely concerned about the health impacts of heat waves, wildfire smoke, and both drought and flooding on Oregonians. In addition, these impacts can reduce or even cause full crop loss, cause tree death, and insect infestation in our forests.

This bill will help elevate actions and techniques that help draw carbon pollution out of the atmosphere and store it in our soils, tidal wetlands, and forested stream-sides. The benefits of actions like cover crops, growing trees longer in intact ecosystems and rotational grazing result in resilience in the face of drought. Less irrigation is needed. Soils hold onto more water with higher soil organic material. These soils also absorb and better filter water to allow the streams to run clean and cold in the face of heat waves or flooding.

The bill will provide incentives that increase jobs. Growing trees longer results in several courses of pre-commercial thinning, employing loggers that work not just using one machine to clear cut but to selectively log. This can employ up to 4 times more workers. Tree planting is needed along streams and in severely burned federal lands again increasing jobs and resulting in access to federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act.

This is a win-win-win bill. Jobs, protection from climate threats and improved water quality and quantity. We won't get to a lower carbon emission level without natural climate solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.