

Submitter: Heather Keisler Fornes
On Behalf Of: Portland Fruit Tree Project
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure: HB3016

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy, and members of the committee,

My name is Heather Keisler Fornes (she/her) and I'm the Executive Director for the Portland Fruit Tree Project, an established nonprofit that envisions joyful communities where every fruit tree is seen as an abundant resource that strengthens community ties, grows food equity, and contributes to a more just and resilient urban environment.

I am submitting testimony in support of HB 3016, or the TREES Act.

Our organization supports this act most broadly because our State, and our Planet are in a climate emergency and everything we can do to address that is important. For our organization directly, this act aligns with our own programming that works with homeowners and renters - predominately of color - living in low canopy and racially diverse neighborhoods to plant and provide establishment care for culturally meaningful fruit trees. These trees, as they establish, will contribute to food access through their abundance, to shade (most fruit trees are fairly fast growing, so can impact shade access faster than many larger trees, so are wonderful ways to supplement the urban canopy), and to community knowledge and resilience through engaging neighbors in the care and harvest of the trees over many years. They will also contribute to generational wealth by increasing the property values of the homes they are planted at AND neighboring homes. Beyond the trees we're planting, we are also engaged, as a part of the Connecting Canopies Coalition, in workforce training programs to ensure that the fruit trees have trained people to care for them - a skill that easily transfers to other tree care and landscaping roles.

We have seen enormous demand for fruit trees as well as for training opportunities and are thrilled that there could be broader support for that, and similar, work in our state. Regardless of what organizations might benefit from this act, the impacts on our state and our residents could be huge. We urge the committee to vote yes for HB 3016 and amendments.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective,
Heather Keisler Fornes
Portland Fruit Tree Project