

Submitter: Helena Birecki

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure: SB1593

Dear Chair Meek and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SB 1593. Though it has become only a study bill, it is a step in the right direction.

I live in South Tillamook County, and I wasn't here during the Labor Day Fires but I remember my Mom calling me on the phone, panicking, saying she couldn't breathe. Luckily she was able to evacuate and the wind turned away from her house, but just a few miles away in Otis many community members tragically lost their homes.

I agree with Senator Golden and the League of Women Voters that Oregon needs to support funding for community wildfire risk reduction and resilience.

The timber industry should return to contributing more to the Oregon State budget as it was before the timber severance tax was largely eliminated in the 1990s, which resulted in a loss of over three billion dollars that would have gone to rural communities, and it is good that the proposal is for a progressive tax that is lower for smaller landholders.

It's also important that the proposal include a tax incentive for stewarding the forest more sustainably:

Longer rotations and protecting mature and old growth trees actually protect against fast-spreading wildfire, in part by protecting soil moisture, reducing temperature, and enhancing water resources.

REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts)— who are 64% of timber owners— and others, shouldn't be making big profits clearcutting forests at the expense of Oregonians health and safety while paying almost no taxes. The least that the Oregon government can do is to make timber companies pay their share of taxes for the public good. I urge you to vote Yes on SB 1593.

Thank you,
Helena Birecki