

Submitter: Kara Klietz

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to give testimony from my experience living on the Oregon Coast for the past 5 years. My name is Kara Klietz, a community member living in North Bend, Oregon, an area that has seen a significant decline in eelgrass population. I remember my first experience meeting eelgrass on a kayak trip within the South Slough Reserve and guided by Reserve staff. The biodiversity of two worlds, marine and freshwater, meeting in perfect union provided habitat for an amazing amount of critters for a young natural resource student to get absolutely giddy about: harbor seals floating along with us, a variety of birds soaring above and nestling into the conifers surrounding us, and what lay below the surface was even more intriguing. The Reserve staff took us to known eelgrass populations where this plant species glimmered in the sunlight of the shallow water with animals bobbing in and out.

That kayak trip changed everything for me, primarily my connection and love for this watershed and the place I now call home. I grew to learn more about this fascinating plant species, how it sequesters carbon more effectively than trees, how it acts as a critical nursery habitat for aquatic life to grow stronger before entering the ocean, and how eelgrass is incredibly difficult to reestablish when the habitat has been destroyed. Eelgrass needs community to thrive and rapid action on HB 3580 is absolutely necessary to protect these dwindling populations before it is too late.

Not only is eelgrass essential for coastal climate change resilience but it also is the backbone of our local fishing economy. Eelgrass is interconnected in estuaries' food web and, like mentioned earlier, is a nursery for the fish to grow bigger before entering the ocean. Fish species depend on these eelgrass habitats as their last space for refuge to grow stronger before leaving the nursery and braving the ocean. The local fishing industry is absolutely dependent on the eelgrass population.

I truly believe that HB 3580 needs to move forward and is a solution for the Southern Coast of Oregon, balancing both environmental needs, as well as economic. Thank you for your consideration of this Bill and for hearing my voice.

Sincerely,

Kara Kliez