

Submitter: Ben Deumling
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1051
March 22, 2025
Senate Committee On Rules
RE: Opposition to SB 1051

Chair Senator Jama, Vice-Chair Senator Bonham, and members of the committee,

My name is Ben Deumling, and I have spent my whole life working in the forests of Oregon and for the last 18 years have run my own wood products business with the goal of finding ways to support and improve these forests that we all hold dear. For the last 4 years I have had the honor and privilege to serve on the Oregon Board of Forestry. I submit this testimony in opposition to this bill as an individual and not representing any group or organization.

From my perspective, I do not see the problem that this bill is trying solve. The board already works very closely with the Governor and her office to hire and fire a State Forester. DAS runs the recruitment process, and the Board works in close consultation with both the Governor and constituents during this process. Shifting ownership of this process from the Board which is made up of 7 subject matter experts with a wide ranging set of perspectives and backgrounds, but with the common goal of caring for the forests of Oregon to the Senate body seems unnecessary. With all due respect to the Senate, this is a large group with only limited direct understanding of forestry issues, while the Board of Forestry is directly involved in these issues every day.

It is clear that any State Forester must have the support of the Governor, the Board of Forestry and the Legislature in order to effectively do their job. But it is the Board of Forestry with whom they work most closely, serving as secretary to the Board. It is also the Board that has the most direct understanding of the work that the State Forester must oversee.

Due to the very long timescales at which our forests grow, of all agencies in Oregon, I think that Forestry is uniquely served by a steady guiding leader who can hopefully serve a long tenure that transcends any particular administration. While we have not always been this fortunate in Oregon to have a State Forester with a long tenure, this is something that we should be striving for. We should be working to create the conditions for a well qualified and vetted leader to serve as a State Forester for a decade if possible. Unfortunately, SB 1051 risks the opposite by moving the control of this position closer to the political process and farther away from the subject matter experts who best understand what it takes to slowly and steadily guide forest management in this great state of Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Ben Deumling