

March 25, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Rules

Re: SB 1051

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony towards SB 1051.

My name is Paul Harlan. I am a lifelong Oregonian and recently retired in 2020 from 34 years in the Forest Products industry as a Forester, Resource Manager, Sawmill Manager and Vice President – Resources for a privately held forest products company. I have spent my whole career working and living in small rural communities here in Oregon.

I am strongly opposed to SB 1051 that would fundamentally change the appointment and position of the Oregon State Forester.

As it stands today a Board representing a diverse and geographically ranging constituency hiring the State Forester ensures that there is broad support for this position both at the constituency level but also at the staff level.

The State Forester must lead a large agency and to do this the staff must have the respect and confidence in this individual. It is a natural resource-based agency and this person must have the basic understanding of the scientific as well as social aspects of forestry in Oregon and how this position must exude this confidence to the public

and to the staff. You select people with accounting knowledge to lead agencies that set up and maintain and audit financial functions. For legal positions we select individuals that have knowledge and a working understanding of law. You do the same for natural resources, someone with an infinite knowledge of the subject and that knows the current issues and has been involved in articulating and working through these issues. The current structure of the State Forester selection and oversight has done this successfully for approximately 50 years.

This also provides for continuity in the leadership of the agency during election cycles. Natural Resource management is a long-term commitment that needs consistency in direction and leadership. By having it a Gubernatorial appointment means that the very leadership of the Agency and of the staff is up for realignment and re-direction every election cycle. Department of Forestry staff will be in a constant state of flux as to what their next direction will be and how they will fit in. Our state agencies need strong leadership and direction that attracts long term staff and creates a strong working team and environment. If SB 1051 is to be the case you would be better off to not even have a State Forester position.

Bluntly this is a poor maneuver to further erode the diversity and equity that is built in to the current Board of Forestry selection process for appointing a new State Forester.

The current Board of Forestry represents the diverse regions and views of citizens of Oregon. Putting the selection of a new State Forester in one individual's hand will erode the working relationship of the board and undermine its current collaborative problem solving.

SB 1051 is bad for the Board of Forestry.

And SB 1051 will be a disaster for Oregon Department of Forestry staff and direction.

I would strongly ask for your rejection of SB 1051.

Respectfully,

Paul Harlan

Boulder Slope Tree Farm

Enterprise, OR