

March 25, 2025

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

My name is Leslie Lehmann and I am writing in opposition to SB 1051.

I served for sixteen years as founding Executive Director of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI), a state agency dedicated to forestry education for general public, K-12 and forest landowner communities. My experience also includes top management posts in higher education, the Governor's Office, Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services and private sector natural resource development.

This bill would needlessly change two fundamental and crucial aspects of the role of State Forester. Turning this position into a political appointee would create instability within the agency and allow political agendas, rather than science and sound policy, to dictate the mission.

The issues facing ODF –wildfires, environmental and economic outcomes on state and private forests – are significant and affect all Oregonians. You need forestry expertise and management experience to navigate the risks and benefits these issues pose.

While political appointees can be effective directors of some state agencies, challenges confronting the Department of Forestry are too complex, and the consequences of forest management decisions too long-term, for frequent turnover of leadership and priorities. Forest management should be based on science and consistent, well-crafted policies.

I ask that you oppose SB 1051.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Leslie Lehmann

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