

To: Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

Re: Testimony in Support of SB485 -2

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my full support for Senate Bill 485 with the -2 amendments. As a small forestland owner and long-time Oregonian, I believe this bill is crucial to preserving Oregon's working forests and ensuring families can continue their legacy of stewardship without being punished by burdensome estate taxes.

Good forest stewardship depends on long-term, generational ownership. Families like mine manage our lands with a vision that spans decades—not for short-term gain, but to protect water quality, support biodiversity, and responsibly produce timber. Unfortunately, Oregon's current estate tax framework forces many landowners to sell off parcels or harvest prematurely to cover tax burdens, breaking apart carefully managed forests and threatening their ecological and economic value.

SB485 -2 addresses this issue in a practical, balanced way. It adjusts the participation requirements to better reflect how small forestland is actively managed and ensures the 2023 exemption can benefit those it was meant to serve.

But this bill also matters to me in the broader context of Oregon's fiscal responsibility. In testimony I submitted on HB 3489, I raised serious concerns about how tax revenue, particularly estate and severance taxes on natural resource landowners, is being allocated. A major red flag is the plan to direct 40% of HB 3489's new revenue to Oregon's General Fund. Recent history shows why this is problematic.

Take the Oregon State Capitol renovation project. After nearly a decade of construction, the project's costs have ballooned to \$595 million—over \$200 million beyond original estimates. What's most concerning is how these overruns were quietly absorbed late in the legislative session through budget bills with minimal public awareness, no clear hearings, and virtually zero accountability. This is a stark example of how General Fund dollars can be mismanaged with little transparency, leaving taxpayers—many of them landowners like myself—footing the bill.

That's why SB485 -2 is not just about tax fairness. It's about keeping forestlands in the hands of people who care for them and ensuring that money taken from these families isn't wasted through mismanaged state projects. Until there is stronger oversight and public accountability in how General Fund dollars are spent, I believe Oregon should be extremely cautious about expanding the tax burden on the very people who sustain its forests, water, and rural communities.

Please support SB485 -2. It is a vital, common-sense step to protect Oregon's natural resource heritage while pushing back against a tax system that too often asks the most from those who give the most to our landscape.

Sincerely,

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Forestland Owner

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