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February 10, 2014

Oregon Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development
Attn: Beth Patrino, Committee Administrator

Subject: Hearing Testimony for SB 1578

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Biomass Thermal Energy Council to express support for SB 1578, as amended, to make biomass an eligible green energy technology to meet the state's 1.5% investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations.

The Biomass Thermal Energy Council (BTEC) is a 130-member non-profit national association of biomass fuel producers, appliance manufacturers and distributors, supply chain companies and non-profit organizations that view biomass thermal energy as a renewable, responsible, clean and energy-efficient pathway to meeting America's energy needs. BTEC engages in research, education, and public advocacy for the fast growing biomass thermal energy industry from Washington State to Washington, D.C.

The 1.5% requirement can help Oregon increase its energy independence and lower its carbon footprint. It can also stimulate new economic opportunity and employment in its communities. Adding biomass to the list of eligible green energy technologies will bring parity to the state's building codes and green energy jobs to many of its rural forest communities.

BTEC is aware that over 20 community-scale biomass thermal energy projects scattered across 10 Oregon Counties provide space heat and hot water to schools, hospitals, airports and visitor centers in small communities. These types of projects provide numerous community benefits, including:

- Saving public agencies money on heating fuel purchase costs that can be used for teachers or other public service priorities;
- Keeping energy dollars expended on heating fuel local by re-circulating them in communities and creating jobs in woody biomass harvesting, processing, and delivery;
- Facilitating thinning of overly dense forest stands by creating market demand for small trees and biomass;
- Avoiding the smoke and cost of pile burning thousands of tons of thinning slash from forest restoration activities;
- Slashing CO2 emissions by thousands of tons by switching use from fossil fuels; and
- Increasing the overall energy independence of local forest communities.

With many of these projects already in development and implemented across the state, the benefits of biomass thermal energy are proven. But exclusion of biomass from the eligible 1.5% green energy technologies could stymie wider adoption of these local, renewable-sourced energy solutions. To catalyze the development of renewable thermal technologies, there must be parity among all available sources (e.g. solar, geothermal, biomass). The adoption of SB 1578 would provide an opportunity to not only level the playing field for all green technologies, but for the State of Oregon to become a national leader in biomass thermal energy building code policy.

BTEC asks that you support SB 1578 to help create new green energy jobs in forest communities, keep energy dollars recirculating locally, support forest stewardship, increase the state's energy independence, and reduce CO2 emissions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Seymour". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Joseph Seymour
Executive Director
Biomass Thermal Energy Council
Tel: 202-596-3974, x302