



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

June 18, 2019

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I wish to file an explanation for my “aye” vote on House Bill 2020. I have heard passionate arguments from sections of my community who very much support the bill, and those who vehemently oppose it. I want to ensure my statement is on record.

HB 2020 is the product of years of climate policy analysis, research, and reports that predate my time in this Legislature. While there was much debate on the House floor on the bill, nearly all of my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle recognized the issue of global warming. Over 10 years since my formal introduction to the concept of climate change, we are confronted with even more dire and imminent threats from climate change. In fact, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued a warning that we as a planet will face unprecedented and devastating consequences such as widespread famine, flooding, and drought if we don’t take bold action to reduce greenhouse emissions by 2030. Locally, within our own community, we face multiple climate threats that are affecting our local economies.

These impacts, if left unchecked, have the potential to be catastrophic for our community. As the representative of a district that includes the most state-owned forestland in the state, we are at risk for significant fire danger as our summers grow hotter—even with responsible management of our lands. As temperatures rise, many tree species we harvest, like the Western hemlock, are unlikely to be able to adapt. This risks the investments of not only larger timber operations, but also small woodland owners who rely on that investment income both in the short term and as a generationally-bestowed asset. Many jobs in my district are still resource or tourism based, particularly those engaged in commercial and recreational fishing. Many of the cities and towns in House District 32 run along the Pacific Ocean or line rivers like the Columbia, and these population centers could be significantly impacted by sea level rise.

Rather than inaction, I chose to fight hard to make this bill better for our district. I asked the House committee co-chair to meet with me and representatives from one of our largest mills to hear firsthand their concerns, and I advocated for improvements to protect our state’s energy-intensive, trade-exposed companies, called EITEs. Through these changes in the bill, EITEs like “Pulp, Paper, and Paperboard Mills,” “Sawmills and Wood Preservation,” “Veneer, Plywood, and Engineered Wood Product Manufacturing” are now specifically protected. I pushed to ensure that the bill recognized the best-in-class technology that our companies have already invested in, and the final version of the bill now gives these EITEs 100% direct allowances through 2025. Six years from now, EITEs will then be evaluated to continue to ensure that they are recognized for all they can do to improve energy efficiency – and if they are continuing to meet these standards, they will receive 95% direct allowances for a subsequent nine years. Minor allowance purchases will be partially returned in the form of grants to these businesses to help afford equipment upgrades. The bill gives EITEs the ability to continue to operate competitively—and acknowledges how important they are to our communities.





HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

House Bill 2020 will also make sure that projects under the program pay living wages and produce good jobs, which is why the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council and other unions have endorsed the bill. I am heartened by their testimony in the final days of committee hearings, where their Executive Secretary said “climate change is a reality that must be addressed by state and national governments sooner or later. HB 2020 has the potential to push Oregon to the front of the pack in terms of innovation, worker training, and economic transition, ensuring our industries are competitive for decades to come.”

I am grateful that colleagues listened to public testimony that talked about the way that higher gas prices disproportionately affect our coastal and rural communities, and I look forward to voting yes on Senate Bill 1051 as well. SB 1051 will provide a credit back for any gas price impacts attributable to the program for low- and moderate-income households in Oregon, as well as a credit for certain diesel fuel costs used in farm and forestry activities. The Committee also sought to mitigate and avoid energy bill impacts to low income households altogether, and crafted the bill to provide for a gradual transition away from fossil fuels. After months of work, our state’s largest utilities – Pacific Power, PGE, and NW Natural – have all determined that they can now support HB 2020. I imagine that was no easy feat.

While this vote explanation will disappoint my constituents who wanted me to vote no, I intend to continue to engage in the cap and trade program implementation to ensure that the benefits promised by advocates are delivered to our rural and coastal communities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tiffany Mitchell".

Representative Mitchell

