

Erin Coleman Isselmann

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May 27, 2021

Representative Nancy Nathanson  
House Committee on Revenue  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: House Revenue Committee Work Session on House Bill 2357 A 5/24/2021**

Dear Chair Nathanson, Members of the Committee and Committee Staff:

I am writing in my personal capacity regarding statements that were made during the House Revenue Committee Meeting on 5/24/2021 during the Work Session on House Bill 2357 A. I am aware and understand the restrictions of (ORS 526.650). The information that I provide in this letter is not intended in any way to affect or otherwise influence this bill or any other pending legislation. I merely want to correct the record with regard to statements made about me by committee members during the Work Session on House Bill 2357 A.

Representative Pham made the following statement starting at 52:19 minutes into the committee meeting:

***“I think where it comes to crossed the lines, is OFRI has actually... there is email evidence that was released during the investigative reports that OFRI’s director, Erin Isselmann actively tried to undercut an Oregon State researcher who planned to survey the public perception of spraying herbicides in private forests to the researcher’s Dean.”***

This statement is inaccurate and harmful both to my professional and personal reputation. At no time during my tenure at OFRI did I actively seek to undercut the work of a researcher at Oregon State University. In May of 2019, I reached out to Interim Dean of the College of Forestry, Anthony Davis after I received a copy of a questionnaire from a survey that was fielded by a researcher at Oregon State University. Dean Davis served on the OFRI board of directors in an ex officio capacity. As such, Dean Davis was my main contact at the OSU College of Forestry. I had questions about the survey design and the intended use of the survey. Dean Davis put me in touch with the researcher (Professor Mark Needham) and we subsequently discussed the survey design and the larger context of the survey in relation to a multi-year scientific research project being conducted by other faculty members at the College of Forestry. I took no further action regarding this survey or the research of Professor Needham. Nothing that I did or said could remotely be construed as trying to undercut Professor Needham’s research.

Representative Pham further stated that:

**“The emails released by the journalists also showed that they were monitoring legislators and monitoring ballot measures, and actually this group that was supposed to be educating the public on forest practices is making comments such as ‘I don’t think that representative is very smart’ and just making basically lobbying and basically crossing the line between forest**

**research and in this case actually undermining forest research happening in our public universities that counteracts with what the logging industry asserts. So those are examples of when it is crossing the line in terms of lobbying.”**

These statements are inaccurate and harmful both to my professional and personal reputation. I believe that when Representative Pham mentions legislators and ballot measures, she may be referencing the emails that I directed be released to journalists in response to public records requests. These emails were composed by former employees of OFRI before I joined the agency. Because Representative Pham names me as OFRI’s director at the beginning of her statement and because she does not make any distinction between who was responsible for alleged inappropriate activities, her statement may have given the impression that I undertook these alleged inappropriate activities or, at least, that they took place during my tenure at OFRI. At no time during my tenure at OFRI (July 2018 to present) have I sent emails that monitor legislators or ballot measures. I have not made comments such as ‘I don’t think that representative is very smart.’ At no time during my tenure at OFRI have I undermined forest research taking place at a public university.

A few minutes later into the Work Session (54:22), Representative Valderrama made the following statement:

**“I do think that in the investigations that at least I have heard, that there was corruption that was revealed and a lack of accountability in OFRI so I do think that there has been an intentionality that has been investigated in terms of misleading the public about the strength of our forest laws.”**

Public corruption involves a breach of public trust and/or abuse of position by federal, state, or local officials and their private sector accomplices. By broad definition, a government official, whether elected, appointed or hired, may violate both state and federal law when he/she asks, demands, solicits, accepts, or agrees to receive anything of value in return for being influenced in the performance of their official duties. To my knowledge there has been no investigation that has revealed corruption by OFRI, its board or its employees. This statement is inaccurate and harmful to the reputation of OFRI, its board of directors and its employees.

I respectfully request that this letter be added to the official legislative record of House Bill 2357 A.

Regards,

Erin C. Isselmann