

**Written Testimony Before the House Committee on
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Supporting HB 4045
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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Chair Witt, Vice Chair Esquivel, Vice Chair Frederick, and members of the Committee:

Oregon Environmental Council supports HB 4045, restoring the continuing education committee for well constructors.

Well constructors perform a critical role for Oregonians who rely on groundwater for drinking water, irrigation, and other uses. It is essential that they know how to do their job safely while protecting groundwater resources.

This bill restores a continuing education requirement for well constructors that sunset in January 2014. Continuing education is a necessary requirement for many professions, especially those that protect public health and safety. Oregon should restore its continuing education requirement for well constructors by passing this bill.

Improperly constructed wells can create a point of entry for contamination into Oregon's groundwater. Once groundwater becomes contaminated, it is incredibly difficult and expensive to clean up. Unfortunately, Oregon already has three Groundwater Management Areas where high nitrate levels make the water unsafe to drink. In some cases, improperly constructed wells contribute to the problem, in addition to the primary pollution sources from irrigated agriculture and improperly functioning septic systems. Because groundwater is such a vulnerable and critical natural resource, it is important to ensure that well constructors receive ongoing education to keep their skills fresh and up to date.

This program never should have been allowed to sunset in January 2014, and we urge you to pass HB 4045 so the program can be reinstated without delay.