



May 22, 2015

To: Chair Holvey; Members of the House Business & Labor Committee

RE: Support for SB 580

The League of Oregon Cities appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 580-A. The League has provided testimony on past legislation related to the landscape contractor industry and we were an active member of the interim work group due to our unique interest from the perspective of municipal water suppliers who supply domestic water to more than 75 percent of the population of Oregon.

Water supply shortages are an ever-increasing reality for many parts of our state. Currently, Oregon is facing one its driest years on record. Snowpack is at record lows with 60% of the state's snowpack monitoring sites showing the lowest, and earliest, peak snowpack in over 30 years.¹ A Governor-declared drought already exists in seven counties and on May 21 the Oregon Drought Council forwarded seven additional county drought requests on to the Governor for her approval. It is anticipated that there will be additional requests made by other counties as the summer months approach. In 2014, there were a total of 10 counties in declared drought status. This year we are already at 14 and counting. As a result, water conservation is and will remain a critical issue as we look to provide adequate water resources for existing and future municipal, agricultural, economic, recreational and environmental needs.

Water suppliers in Oregon today are mandated to adopt Water Management and Conservation Plans (WMCPs) as a condition of obtaining new water rights or extending the development timeline for existing rights. These plans outline curtailment efforts that would need to be implement during supply shortages. Such curtailments can have significant impacts on individuals and businesses whose economic livelihood is dependent upon adequate municipal water supply.

The landscape contracting industry is a vital component in the effort to ensure efficient water use as a means to address water supply challenges. Depending on the region of the state and time of year, outdoor water use for landscaping purposes can account for as much as 50 to 60 percent of the drinking water we supply. As a result, we have continued to advocate for the importance of maintaining continuing education for the industry. Many municipal water providers offer course at little to no cost for contractors in an effort to provide information on best practices for efficient irrigation and landscaping practices, including drought resistant lawns and plants.

We thank you for your consideration of this legislation and urge your support for SB 580-A.

If you have questions, please contact Tracy Rutten at the League of Oregon Cities at 503-588-6550 or trutten@orcities.org.