



## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 4125**

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February 4, 2016

Chair Vega Pederson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 4125 to ensure safe well water in our state. My name is Anna Stiefvater and I am a public health nurse working and a member of the Oregon Nurses Association.

While seventy percent of Oregonians rely on wells for at least a portion of their drinking water, disturbing new findings show that in many areas of the state, this water is polluted. Chemicals like nitrate, arsenic and pesticides are being found in well water, resulting from failing septic tanks, fertilizers or nearby livestock waste. As a public health nurse, I am deeply concerned that thousands of Oregonians could be unwittingly consuming water from contaminated sources that may heighten the risk for cancer, miscarriage or other serious health issues.

One reason this issue can go undetected is that while water from public systems is tested regularly for safety, domestic water sources may not be. HB 4125 would provide a reasonable solution to this rising issue by better ensuring that groundwater quality can be better tested and monitored across the state and the root causes of well water contamination are prevented through increased education.

Chiefly, the proposed Safe Well Water Bill provides financial assistance to low-income property owners to repair and treat their wells and would also require landlords to test wells and provide this information with their tenants. In addition, this proposal empowers the Oregon Health Authority to analyze real estate data to identify areas where groundwater threats may exist and work with communities to resolve contaminant problems.

Finally, HB 4125 would create needed capacity for county health departments to develop voluntary well testing initiatives and education programs around this issue. My experience working in the field of public health has shown me that when we establish meaningful programs that invest in both quality health resource infrastructure and adequate preventative measures that we see much stronger long term community outcomes. It is important that action be taken on the issue of well water contamination and we work to protect individuals and families from the harm of potentially life-threatening diseases.

ONA urges your support for HB 4125.