

January 23, 2019
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Member of Drinking Water Advisory Committee

To: Senate Committee on Health Care
Re: SB27

I am in favor of funding SB 27 to fund 5 FTE (2 Data Entry and 3 Technical Services) positions at the Drinking Water Program. However, I don't like that the funding would come from just public water systems. This program serves ALL Oregonians and this funding would be a pass-through for just some Oregonians.

Rightfully this funding should come from General Fund.

I have owned and operated a drinking water laboratory for over 39 years in Salem. I have many public water systems as customers. I know they do not have extra money. They are bombarded with increased testing, lead line removal, emergency planning for the Big One, to name a few things, on top of their regular job duties to serve safe drinking water. Duties are added to public works depts as if these tasks can be done at the snap of a finger yet their duties involve tons of instruments, equipment and time which equal a lot of expenses.

Oregonians not in the industry are often delusional (and I see a lot of them at my lab) about drinking water and its purity. They just assume there is safe water whether it is a children's summer camp, a small subdivision, a small town or a large city. There are children, people with cancer and immune diseases in all of these places. Yet we do not live in a state where pure safe water just flows to all of us from pristine springs and rivers. Water requires testing and treatment to insure its safety for all. Nor is it cheap. Just look at the City of Salem's concerns with cyanotoxins.

We need to get a reality check in Oregon: **Safe drinking water is not cheap.**

And there is no such thing as free water. The private well owners think their water is "free" but they are actually using Oregon's water and not being charged. They also use public water systems at work or when traveling. They should be contributing to this.

Everyone in the state should share in funding safe water throughout the state.

Without this funding, the Oregon Drinking Water Program has to decide which systems will take precedence in tracking results. Which systems do you want to have them drop? Children's

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camps? The small subdivision? We all visit around the state and often unknowingly drink from multiple water systems every day. Did you know there are several small public water systems

just east of Lancaster Drive by Chemeketa Community College inside the City of Salem limits?

At one of those homes, you might assume you are on City of Salem water but actually are not.

Once again, which water systems do you want to have reduced or no tracking?

Dave Emme, Drinking Water Manager, has spent a lot of time looking at this situation. Prior funding for the program has come from lottery dollars, cannabis dollars and General Fund along with the on-going EPA grants. I support his endeavors and concern for public health.

I don't know how much staff this program had a few years ago but it was more than it has now.

While the increase in # of water systems is minimal, there **ARE** many more rules to track and data coming in.

Shouldn't ALL the people in Oregon participate financially to have a program that works to insure drinking water safety for all the people in the state?

To produce consistently safe drinking water is like a baton in a relay. Everyone has to run their leg of the distance and accomplish their specific tasks to meet the complete the relay. No one leg can complete the relay alone.

Here's how the drinking water relay works:

Step 1: Samples are brought to lab

Step 2: Lab runs testing, "bad" results are faxed ASAP to Drinking Water and water system notified

Step 3: Drinking Water assesses results and notifies water system

Step 4: Water system performs remediation and re-tests

If there isn't enough staff at Drinking Water to get to the faxes (Step 2), then the whole system flops at the early stage of the relay. What good does it do a lab to quickly report "bad" results is there is no one there to affirm the info and follow through with the water system?

In past years at conventions I have heard Oregon referred to as the "Arkansas of the West".

This is due to the disconnect between what Oregonians BELIEVE about their state and what is truly happening in the state. A quick example. Oregonians become furious over coliform levels

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in the rivers and streams, yet do not support accredited wastewater labs as other states do.

ANYONE can perform wastewater testing in Oregon. No experience or accreditation needed.

This reminds me of that remark. Will we fund the basics or just imagine we have and just not look to make sure it is working?

The request in this bill is for basic staffing to sustain a basic program.

This is not an exciting new program but it does address the essential needs of ALL Oregonians irrespective of their politics. People are paying attention to drinking water like I've never seen before in my years of being in the laboratory business since 1977.

They are expecting the legislature to pay attention also and keep them safe.

Please find funding for this program's staffing.