

Health Department

January 23, 2019

Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE - HR A
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 27 - Relating to Oregon Drinking Water Quality Act fees

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the Committee, my name is Dr. Paul Lewis and I am the Health Officer for Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 27.

Local and state Public Health officials play an important role in ensuring that public drinking water systems operate in compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) which regulates large and small drinking water systems.

In Oregon a “public water system” is defined as such when they serve more than 25 daily users.

In Oregon, all drinking water systems are inspected by public health officials, who complete a “sanitary survey inspection”, the frequency of which is based on the size of the system as well as previous history of violations. The inspection includes water chemistry testing as well as treatment system protocols and infrastructure inspection.

In addition to completing the routine survey inspections, public health officials respond to bacteriological and chemical detections that can trigger a boil water order to residential and commercial customers of the drinking water system.

In Oregon, water systems pay a fee to the Oregon Health Authority for the services that the State and Counties provide. SB27 will remedy a problem with the current fee structure used by the state, which does not factor in the size of the water system with the services needed to support its routine operation.

This bill creates a fee schedule that is based on the type and size of the water system, which are key indicators of the complexity of the regulatory oversight required by the

SDWA. Using these factors to calculate the fee allows for appropriate scaling for small, medium and larger water systems, and supports an important responsibility of local public health authorities.

Recent news events related to lead contamination as well as the presence of toxic algae, locally and nationally, underscore the importance of reliably safe drinking water to all communities throughout Oregon. SB 27 is a reasonable and prudent approach to ensuring that all of Oregon's communities can rely on their water to be safe for drinking, bathing, cooking, swimming - which are essential to the health and well-being of all who live here in Oregon.

In Multnomah County we currently inspect 41 water systems and provide technical assistance to an additional 12 water systems. The funding mechanism for County was established in 2007 and has not changed since, even with the additional work created from new systems and new regulations. Currently Multnomah County is subsidizing this effort as the cost operating this program exceeds the fees required by the current schedule.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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