



Supporting SB 27

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

The Oregon Environmental Health Association is writing in support of SB 27. Thank you for this opportunity to consider the local environmental health perspective on funding for the OHA Drinking Water Services program.

- Local and State environmental health officials play an important role in ensuring safe drinking water under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Water systems are regulated through sanitary surveys, water quality alerts, plan reviews, technical support, and violation and survey deficiency follow up.
- All of these duties are performed by local and state staff to ensure safe drinking water.
- Compensation to local counties has been stagnant for 12 years causing local counties to provide reduced services to drinking water systems.
- The State Drinking Water program has lost over 30% of its positions in drinking water services since 2009 due to budget reductions from the general fund.
- Reduction of staff and resources has led to reduced regulation of small state regulated water systems.

This bill addresses the problem by broadening statutory authority for program fees. Specifically, it would replace the existing sanitary survey fee with an annual regulatory fee that supports a broader range of mandated services and would allow technical staff to regulate small state-regulated water systems again.

This bill will restore 5 positions at the state level and increase funding for local environmental health departments for their work in the drinking water program. This mix of revenue from federal funds, general fund and fees is necessary to support a sustainable program. We would be willing to provide testimony if the opportunity comes up again.

Thank you for your time,

Bill Emminger, President OEHA
Oregon Environmental Health Association
Bill.emminger@co.benton.or.us