

February 14, 2019

Dear members of the House Energy & Environment Committee,

I write as a resident of Southern Oregon who has been severely impacted by arsenic poisoning and urge you to pass House Bill 2860 to help others avoid the harm I have suffered.

In 2000, I bought property in Trail, a small community in the Rogue River Valley. My water supply was well water, which I drank, used to grow my garden and prepare my food, and used to fill my pool. After several years I began experiencing an unsettling array of symptoms that signaled serious illness, from high blood pressure and thyroid levels, to continual dizziness and headaches, to persisting gastrointestinal issues. No doctor was able to identify what was wrong with me as my symptoms grew ever more acute until one day I was no longer able to stand on my own. Finally, one doctor had the foresight to have me tested for heavy metal concentrations. The tests showed I was being poisoned by levels of arsenic 8 times higher than the highest levels found in healthy people. I was also contaminated with high levels of cadmium, mercury and lead.

Unfortunately, there is no way to completely rid the body of arsenic, and my life has been completely altered. I was once very healthy, and I now live with chronic disease. Some of my neighbors in the valley have had similar health issues. I ended up having to move to Medford to access health care on a regular basis, and before I sold my home I made sure to install treatment systems so the new owner would not be harmed.

I hope you are inspired by my situation to pass this modest piece of legislation related to well water safety. HB 2860 will make well water testing mandatory on a periodic basis and will require landlords to inform tenants about the levels of containments in the water. It will support more public education to let people know about the potential health hazards posed by well water. And it will help fund critical treatment systems and upgrades to wells.

As an Oregonian with first-hand knowledge of how critical safe well water is to public health, I urge you to pass HB 2860. Thank you.

Durene Putney
Medford, Oregon
durenep@gmail.com