



Robertson Environmental LLC
2124 NE Reef Avenue
Lincoln City, Oregon 97367

Date: 2019-02-21

Re: HB 2860, Public Comments in Support

Greetings Chair Helm and Fellow Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment:

My name is Paul Robertson. I am an Environmental Scientist and owner of Robertson Environmental LLC in Lincoln City, Oregon. I am reaching out to you regarding my support of House Bill 2860: titled, "*Relating to wells that supply ground water for domestic purposes.*" As a specialist that provides water quality monitoring services including ground water testing, and with a Master of Science in Environmental Diagnosis, it is my scientifically supported position that wells should be regularly tested to insure a safe source of drinking water. This is not surprisingly a position supported by the Environmental Protection Agency, Oregon DEQ, and the Oregon Health Authority. In addition, I find that ethically anyone providing water to the general public be it a large municipality, a rural state park, or a landlord of a single-family residence on a well should be required to have their water tested periodically to insure its potability. Of course, in two out of three of these scenarios requirements already exist to require monitoring. However, in the case of private wells serving three or fewer residences, no testing is required. This is true even when tenants are involved, and effectively the landlord is the *de facto* water service provider to the home. House Bill 2860 takes important first steps in remedying this oversight for several water quality parameters, specifically arsenic, nitrate, and coliform bacteria.

In order to put a human face on this problem, I would submit to you an example I can relay from my professional life. When accepting an offer in a real estate transaction with a home on a well, the Seller is required to have the raw water tested for the same three parameters noted in this bill. After submitting unsatisfactory results of the required water quality tests to a particular owner, the owner asked me to relay to the prospective buyer that there already was a treatment system on the finished water that they would just have to turn on. Previous water tests had apparently been cause enough to install an ultra violet light disinfection system to kill bacteria. The owner, and in this case a landlord as the home was occupied by renters, clearly stated that the system was installed, but after the first year, that he shut it off as he didn't want to pay the cost of the electricity and the new light bulb which needed to be replaced annually. While this is one example of an unscrupulous landlord, given the number of wells in Oregon and the percent that fail to meet water quality standards, even ethical landlords may be unknowingly be providing unsafe water to tenants. Renting in rural Oregon should not come at the cost of risking ones own health because the water is of unknown quality. HB 2860 will provide necessary information and resources to help alleviate much of this risk.

Subsequent legislation or suitable amendments to this bill would however further improve the water quality being provided to renters in rural areas, including at-risk populations of children and thus should also be considered. Of particular concern is the heavy metal lead. Lead is a neurotoxin which has historically been used in plumbing fixtures and solder. As a result public drinking water systems and private residences alike are susceptible to lead exposure through the tap. Again, our laws require that

municipal water suppliers meet water quality standards for lead, yet no protection is explicitly required between a private landlord and a tenant. Further, drinking water sources from springs have been excluded from consideration in this bill and previous bills which have addressed water quality testing in conjunction with real estate transactions. Like all surface waters, springs are very often contaminated by bacteria and are susceptible to impacts from runoff which can also elevate nitrate levels and other contaminants. As springs are regularly used for domestic water, they too should be tested regularly to confirm potability. As such I would encourage the exploration of additional legislation or amendments to address this oversight as well.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide comment on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Paul Robertson, MSc
Environmental Scientist | Owner

w ~ Robertsonenvironmental.com
e ~ Paul@Robertsonenvironmental.com
m ~ 1-541-921-4969

cc: Senator Roblan, Representative Gomberg