

**Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp to
Support Amended HB 3326 and HB 3340:**

***Protecting Water Sources and Improving Domestic Water-Treatment
Communications and Protocols Are Crucial for Public Safety***

Scheduled for public hearing on March 14, 2019, before the
House Committee on Energy and Environment

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Schouten, and Members of the Committee:

The City of Wilsonville supports the rationale behind and the proposed actions of HB 3326 and HB 3340, both of which could be merged and strengthened with minor amendments.

Wilsonville Knows Water Quality Issues: The City of Wilsonville operates a domestic water-treatment facility along the Willamette River that supplies 45,000 residents of the communities of Sherwood and Wilsonville and an extensive array of businesses, including a major soft-drink/water-beverage bottling operation. Additionally, Wilsonville is working with the City of Hillsboro and the Tualatin Valley Water District on the \$1 billion Willamette Water Supply Project that is to supply domestic water to an additional 400,000+ metro-area residents and businesses of Washington County.

During the summer of 2018, the City worked with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on water-treatment and public-communications issues pertaining to “harmful algal blooms” occurring in the Willamette River and tributaries. In addition to modifying the City’s water-treatment procedures to increase the use of the Ozonation Disinfection Process—one of the few known existing methods of treating cyanotoxin-contaminated water—the City also elected out of an abundance of caution to issue a public notice.

OHA Mandates: The City strongly supports both bills’ mandates to OHA to identify sources of pollutants, strategies to reduce pollutants and monitoring those reduction results; we applaud HB 3340’s going further to “determine the causes of harmful algal blooms” and “to develop pollution reduction plans.” The City suggests an additional step is for OHA to “Develop and monitor the effectiveness of strategies for water treatment processes affected by harmful algal blooms and create a set of protocols for water treatment.”

Communications are Critical: The City suggests that Section 4 of HB 3326 should be amended to further augment the ability of OHA to share information with and provide expert advice to public water-treatment facilities that share a common watershed. When the City of Salem issued a public advisory in summer 2018 for water drawn from the North Santiam River, a tributary of the Willamette River, OHA should have been in a position to

alert immediately all North Santiam River and downstream Willamette River public water-treatment facilities, which could then take additional precautions or issue a public notice or advisory as needed. The legislation should require OHA to create a system that promotes among public-water systems the rapid sharing of information on water-quality test results and provides expert recommendations for effective water-treatment processes.

State Funding Support Needed: The City ardently supports the proposed funding allocation to the Department of Environmental Quality as found in Section 5 of HB 3326 and is omitted from HB 3340. OHA’s Drinking Water Services Division, which regulates all 3,000 water systems in the state, has shed almost a third of the office’s “staff since 2011, forcing remaining employees to prioritize regulating some systems over others and stop all but the most critical data management,” according to a June 13, 2018, article in the Statesman Journal. Recent water-quality crisis events have demonstrated a need for greater capacity for OHA to implement effective water-quality oversight and interagency- and public-communications programs that require additional state funding.

Water Systems Should Receive Ozonation Credit: The City recommends that the legislature instruct OHA to credit water systems using Ozonation Disinfection Process. Currently OHA does not recognize the disinfection benefits of ozone prior to filtration, and therefore fails to credit water-treatment facilities with this additional step, which is one of the few existing methods of treating cyanotoxin-contaminated water. The legislature should instruct OHA to undertake a rule-change to recognize the disinfection benefits of ozone prior to filtration and to credit water-treatment facilities with this treatment process.

Increased Federal/State Investment for Water Is Needed: In order to maintain and restore public confidence in public-water systems, the legislature should seek additional state and/or federal funds for increased investments in public drinking-water systems. The Statesman Journal reports that OHA has identified at least 41 water systems in the state at risk for toxic algae blooms out of about 300 Oregon drinking water systems that utilize surface-water sources. Therefore, the City suggests recapitalizing the Business Development Department’s “Special Public Works Fund” at the amount recommended by the Oregon Economic Development Assn. of \$85 million, as well as supplementing federal funds with additional state funds to augment the “Safe Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund” and “Drinking Water Source Protection Fund.” These programs provide low-interest loans or grants to finance improvements to drinking water systems or sources.

The City of Wilsonville respectfully urges passing a merged version of HB 3326 and HB 3340 with minor amendments as outlined in this testimony. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Tim Knapp, Mayor
City of Wilsonville