



Date: February 7, 2020

TO: The Honorable Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Water

FROM: André Ourso, Administrator
Center for Health Protection
Public Health Division
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: House Bill 4071 – Harmful Algal Blooms

This memo is intended to convey the Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) understanding of the purpose of the small utility outreach coordinator position that OHA is required to create under HB 4071.

As you know, the interim workgroup on Harmful Algal Blooms involved numerous stakeholders, including representatives of drinking water utilities. Given the complexity of the subject, the workgroup divided into three sub-workgroups. The Response and Mitigation sub-workgroup recommended the concept of an outreach coordinator to help smaller water systems with planning and preparedness in the event cyanotoxins are detected. During sub-workgroup discussions, OHA staff suggested that the responsibilities of such a position be broadened beyond cyanotoxins to include assistance with planning and preparedness for other water emergencies. Lack of an emergency response plan is one of the most common deficiencies found by OHA staff or County partners during inspections of public water systems.

The bill language captures this broader role in Section 2 with the ending phrase “...and other water-related emergencies.” Consequently, we envision this position fulfilling a dual role of 1) focusing technical and emergency planning assistance toward the 40 smaller water systems required to monitor for cyanotoxins and 2) assisting other smaller water systems (800 Community systems) with emergency preparedness for any drinking water emergency. The position can also serve as a resource during actual emergencies. As such, this position would perform this role and the duties on an ongoing basis. A limited duration for this position would make it difficult for the agency to fill and train

for the position, and ensure that the above specified duties are adequately performed within the limited timeframe.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.