

February 3, 2021

Oregon House Committee on Water

Via: Oregon Legislative Information System testimony portal

Re: Support for HB 2344 relating to labelling requirements for wipes

Chair Helm and Members of the House Committee on Water:

Clean Water Services supports HB 2344 and the required labels that direct consumers to dispose of wipes in the trash.

Clean Water Services (CWS) is a water resources management utility serving more than 600,000 residents and business in urban Washington County. Formed as a county service district in 1970, CWS operates four water resource recovery facilities, 43 pump stations and works with our 12 partner cities to maintain more than 1,000 miles of sewer pipes. CWS works in partnership with others to safeguard the Tualatin River's health and vitality, ensure the economic success of our region, and protect public health through innovative water management solutions, water quality and stream enhancement projects, habitat protection and more. Everything we do aims to protect public health, while enhancing the natural environment.

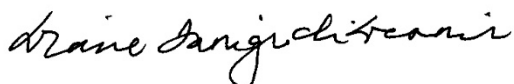
We urge you to vote yes on HB 2344 to combat the nationwide increase in sewer system clogs and equipment damage that result from ever-increasing quantities of inappropriate materials, including wet wipes, being flushed in household and public toilets. While wastewater networks can convey solids such as human waste and small food scraps, the removal of wipes is uniquely challenging because wipes combine into "rag mats" and "ropes" that are impossible to untangle. Accumulation of these materials can cause sanitary sewer overflows that create public health hazards. Removing clogs from pumps, screens and other equipment requires the use of cutting and other heavy industrial tools, which increases hazardous conditions for workers, labor hours and equipment costs.

HB 2344 would require manufacturers or retailers to place "Do Not Flush" labels and warning statements in visible locations on packages containing most types of wet wipes to effectively inform consumers about appropriate disposal after use. HB 2344 is consistent with the INDA/EDANA Code of Practice 2nd edition (published 2018), which was agreed upon by both product manufacturers and wastewater services sector trade organizations.

Wastewater agencies across Oregon have worked hard to educate the public about the problems created when disposable wipes are flushed. COVID-19 has increased the use and disposal of wipes, which has made the situation worse. Local governments have invested significant resources to encourage the public to dispose of wipes in the trash. Billing inserts, social media posts, and radio and television spots are all elements of a major outreach effort undertaken over the past year. Unfortunately, these efforts have not been successful in noticeably reducing volumes of flushed wipes in the sewer system. Clear "Do Not Flush" direction on wipes packaging is needed now because wipes clog pipes.

Clean Water Services urges you to support HB 2344. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Diane Taniguchi-Dennis, MBA, PE, BCEE  
Chief Executive Officer