



WILLAMETTE PARTNERSHIP

March 23, 2021

Senator Taylor and Representative Reardon
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 5545

Willamette Partnership submits written testimony in support of SB 5545, and in particular the \$1.5 million budget package directed to Equitable Water Access and Indigenous Energy Resiliency. Willamette Partnership is a conservation non-profit with a deep commitment to building stronger, healthier, and more equitable communities. We work with communities across Oregon to change how they build infrastructure, protect water sources and critical habitat, and manage farms and forests in ways that strengthen community resilience.

Across the state, Oregonians face complex water challenges. In many communities, water infrastructure is overburdened and there is inadequate water supply to meet growing demand. Changing precipitation patterns and land-use pressures will continue to further exacerbate existing water challenges.

Past investments in water infrastructure have been inequitable in both their benefits and their harms. Addressing these inequities will require significant statewide investment, leveraging federal dollars, and explicitly directing resources to community-centered water infrastructure solutions.

This budget package is focused on understanding the water needs of Black, Indigenous, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Tribal communities and building the networks and approaches to better support these communities in engaging in water management decisions and solutions. This first step of analysis and connection is critical to ensuring our state starts to redress, and does not reinforce, existing

Willamette Partnership stands ready to support the state in moving this body of work forward. The Oregon Water Futures project, a collaborative effort from a diverse set of university and non-profit partners to lift the voices of rural communities of color around water issues, provides a starting point, and we look forward with our partners to sharing this body of work with OWRD and others.

Sincerely,

Sara O'Brien
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