

## HB 2647 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

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**Action Date:** 03/21/23

**Action:** Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Eng.)

**Vote:** 5-4-0-0

**Yeas:** 5 - Gamba, Hartman, Helm, Marsh, McLain

**Nays:** 4 - Boice, Levy B, Owens, Scharf

**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Anna Glueder, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 2/16, 3/21

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#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Declares harmful algal blooms (HABs) to be a threat to safe drinking water and a menace to public health and welfare. Directs the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) in coordination with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to: identify drinking water sources that are susceptible to HABs, develop a testing and monitoring system for these drinking water sources, and prioritize the monitoring of certain high-risk water sources. Directs DEQ in coordination with the OHA to develop and maintain a coordinated monitoring and response strategy to HABs including efforts to determine the causes of HABs, identifying any point or nonpoint sources that contribute to the susceptibility of specific water bodies to them, and develop a pollution reduction plan for identified point sources and nonpoint sources; develop a testing and monitoring system for water sources susceptible to HABs produce timely, publicly available and high-quality data that allows OHA to assess any public health risks; identify pollutant sources contributing to HABs; develop a pollution reduction plan for identified sources and monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Previous efforts to study harmful algal blooms
- Authority of the Department of Environmental Quality to implement response strategies
- Human impacts on harmful algal blooms
- Current procedure of water sample testing

#### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Reassigns the development and maintenance of a harmful algal bloom (HAB) monitoring and response strategy as well as the collection, production, and storage of data related to HAB risk level of harm to public health to the responsibilities of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Requires DEQ in coordination with Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to implement the developed strategies to reduce pollutants. Reassigns the determination of drinking water sources susceptible to or potentially influenced by HABs and adds the development of a system for monitoring and testing to the responsibilities led by OHA. Deletes reporting requirement.

#### BACKGROUND:

A harmful algal bloom (HAB) (or excessive algae growth) occurs when colonies of microscopic algae grow out of control due to the interplay of favorable nutrient, temperature, light, and habitat conditions. While not all algal blooms are toxic, HABs can cause sickness and death in humans, pets, and livestock that come in contact with or drink the water, and also can result in hypoxia (low oxygen) in water bodies, which can kill fish and other wildlife. HABs occur in many different types of waterbodies, including drinking water reservoirs, lakes, and other ponded waters. Over the past decade, various algae-produced toxins have been detected in the surface waters of rivers

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*This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.*

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and lakes around Oregon as well as in large water storage reservoirs in the Willamette River basin. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has the regulatory responsibility for restoring lakes and rivers and develops pollution reduction plans for water bodies below water quality standards. The Oregon Health Authority and DEQ jointly develop drinking water protection plans by regulating water quality permits, licenses, and certification as well as nonpoint pollution source control.

House Bill 2647 A would declare harmful algal blooms a threat to safe drinking water and direct the Oregon Health Authority and the Department of Environmental Quality to identify causes and point sources and susceptible water sources associated with harmful algal blooms and develop and maintain a monitoring and response strategy.