

Submitter: Angelita Sanchez

On Behalf Of: City of Sweet Home

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

Measure: HB3125

Chair Helm and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I am in support of this 100%. I urge you to push for this to move forward and to be passed along to be signed by Governor Kotek.

Sweet Home is in a crisis. We have been trying to update our wastewater treatment facility for decades. As it stand now, we have costs that are spiraling out of control. The original cost estimate is around \$28 million, but with the supply chain issues and inflation costs, we are pushing towards a \$60 million project now. Unfortunately it is no longer a cost that we can continue to defer as we are under the crunch of DEQ and our WWTF is nestled alongside the South Santiam River. Ultimately that flows into the Willamette and right on to Salem.

We have secured some funding from the legislature and started the process of Phase 1. We have also secured a \$30 million grant/loan from the USDA. The problem of upmost concern is the fact that the working families in my community are financially disadvantaged, and we also have to prove to the USDA that we have the capability of repayment. Additionally, without more funding, we will need to raise the water/sewer rates by around \$30-\$50 a month, per household. That is more than a 20% increase to the monthly bill and the USDA is not happy with those numbers.

We still need to receive more funding from other sources, which we are desperately working towards, as truly this project is priced out of our reach, but we do not have any other choice. It must be done. We need to satisfy the requirements of DEQ, while continuing to building affordable housing for our community, yet still be able to offer our ratepayers some relief.

If this bill were to pass, it would release additional funding to communities like Sweet Home, satisfying some of the concerns of the USDA, while offering the residents in our town the opportunity breathe a little easier when we are forced to raise rates to accomplish this need.

Thank you for the consideration.