



# OREGON COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

Representing the collective interests  
of Oregon's 33 local public health  
authorities to improve the health of  
all Oregonians.

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February 16, 2023

Honorable Chair Ken Helm  
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water  
Support HB 2647

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee -

The Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO) is a statewide membership association that works to ensure Local Public Health Authorities (LPHAs) have the ability and resources to improve the health of all people living in Oregon, and at the most basic level, properly address public health needs and protect communities through prevention and mitigation.

Harmful algal blooms pose a direct impact to human health. When blooms occur, people, pets and livestock coming into contact with a toxic bloom can result in severe impacts on health. These include gastrointestinal issues such as stomach pain, nausea, or vomiting; skin or eye irritation; and respiratory challenges, including wheezing or coughing.

These toxic blooms have become more frequent in recent years and have impacted access to clean drinking water for thousands of Oregonians. In 2018, harmful algal blooms in the Detroit Lake impacted access to clean drinking water for residents of Salem and surrounding areas, including the Oregon State Capitol. And, as our weather becomes more extreme, we will have more heat events that create the conditions for algal blooms to proliferate. We need to properly prepare and prevent the impacts on human and animal health.

Although the OHA Drinking Water Services Section currently has rules in effect regarding harmful algal blooms and cyanotoxins in drinking water, HB 2647 will significantly bolster efforts to develop response strategies and advisory alert protocols for these toxic blooms. Current rules address the identification of susceptible bodies of water, the required monitoring for specific toxins (total microcystins and cylindrospermopsin) by public water systems and set health advisory levels. HB 2647 would strengthen these efforts and direct the Department of Environmental Quality to identify and monitor susceptible waters, identify the sources of pollutants that contribute to harmful algal blooms and develop reduction strategies.

HB 2647 correctly declares harmful algal blooms a public health threat and will support efforts to protect the health and welfare of Oregonians.

Respectfully,

Sarah Lochner  
Executive Director, Coalition of Local Health Officials

For more information, contact Sarah Lochner, Executive Director  
[sarah@oregonclho.org](mailto:sarah@oregonclho.org) | 503-507-7786 | [oregonclho.org](http://oregonclho.org)



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.