



February 27, 2023

Representative Helm, Chair
Committee Members
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Subject: Testimony in Favor of House Bill 3123-1—a Bill to Study the Fate and Transport of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) Substances Found in Biosolids that are Land Applied to Agricultural Fields Across the State.

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

My name is Susie Smith; I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA). I'm here today to testify in favor of HB 3123, including the –1 amendment, on behalf of ACWA, the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO). Together, our organizations represent all of Oregon's publicly owned wastewater treatment and stormwater management utilities that provide water quality services across the state.

A key element of these services is management of biosolids--the treated solids byproducts of the wastewater treatment process. Application of biosolids on agricultural lands is a cooperative partnership with farmers that has long been regarded in Oregon as the preferred sustainable management practice. Harnessed as a nutrient rich organic soil amendment, land applied biosolids provide multiple environmental and economic benefits to farms and communities. The Clean Water Act and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) biosolids regulations apply soil, crop science, and peer-reviewed research to set site-specific requirements for land application practices to protect human health, soils, crops, groundwater, and surface waters. However, these data have not yet been developed for PFAS—a group of toxic chemicals of growing concern for human health risks.

Nationwide, PFAS studies underway do not appear to capture the unique conditions found here in Oregon (relatively low concentrations of PFAS combined with a rich and diverse agricultural conditions). The studies we are aware of will not provide the details need to be informative for Oregon policy makers. Monitoring data collected in Oregon by state agencies and local governments have not indicated PFAS contamination levels that are cause for immediate statewide action. However, it is important for Oregon to conduct studies to determine what happens to the levels of PFAS found in biosolids that are land applied in Oregon. This information will help state and local agencies to develop appropriate site-specific actions to address these contaminants of emerging concern. Because PFAS sources, concentrations, and the receiving environment will vary significantly across the state, a "one-size-fits-all" approach to regulate these contaminants is not appropriate.

HB 3123 would help Oregon fill this information gap. This bill would provide \$525,000 directly to Oregon State University Soil and Agricultural Sciences researchers to study the journey and impacts

of PFAS found in biosolids that are land applied in different areas of the state with representative soil types, climate, and crop types. Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, arranged by ACWA as a collaboration of wastewater utilities and the farmers that land apply their biosolids.

For your reference, I have also submitted to the record of this hearing additional background information on HB3123, a fact sheet on biosolids management in Oregon, and ACWA's white paper on PFAS.

We urge your support for this bill and we are available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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