



NETWORK of OREGON

WATERSHED COUNCILS

March 8th, 2023

To: The Oregon Legislature Senate Committee on Human Services

Re: **Support** for **SB606**, Relating to compensation for nonprofit organizations that provide services on behalf of the state; prescribing an effective date.

Greetings, Chair Blouin:

The [Network of Oregon Watershed Councils](#) (NOWC) represents **55 watershed councils** statewide, which are local, community-based, non-regulatory groups that assess and monitor environmental conditions, and conduct voluntary conservation projects to restore/enhance the waters and lands for native species and people. Since 1997, the Oregon legislature has encouraged local governments to form watershed councils through [Oregon Statute 541.910](#).

Most watershed councils are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. Each watershed council is familiar with their particular ecological habitats' features, and works to understand and address specific challenges, usually focusing on rivers or creeks and the lands that drain into them. Watershed councils are led by boards of directors that bring many local interests to the table, such as landowners, companies/industries, municipal/state agencies, elected officials, and community members. Watershed councils re-invest in their local economies, especially in Oregon's rural areas, by providing employment, hiring local contractors, and partnering with other local organizations.

NOWC supports SB606 as it would provide valuable support for watershed councils and our community nonprofit partners.

Like many nonprofits, it is difficult for watershed councils to identify and obtain unrestricted funding that can support administrative capacity across the ebb and flow of grants that support restoration work. Watershed councils can experience significant cash flow issues as they wait for state agency reimbursements on completed restoration

projects. This organizational instability leads to high staff turnover, which makes it difficult to maintain continuity, plan for multi-stage projects, build sustainable partnerships, and recruit staff. The Nonprofit Workforce Retention Fund proposed in this Bill would greatly improve this dynamic, supporting the restoration workforce and watershed council stability that is essential to protecting and enhancing the quality of our watersheds.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Green', enclosed within a faint, hand-drawn circular outline.

Vanessa Green
Executive Director
Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
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