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March 27, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Chair Ken Helm,
Vice-Chair Mark Owens,
Vice-Chair Annessa Hartman,
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2765

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair Hartman, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is testifying in support of HB 2765, which will allow the South Suburban Sanitary District to use and sell their treated wastewater. Finding innovative ways to use and reuse every drop of water is essential to meeting Oregon's water needs and projects like these have a plethora of benefits for communities, agriculture, and the environment.

OWRC is a nonprofit trade association representing irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other local government entities delivering agricultural water supplies throughout Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities. OWRC members deliver water to approximately 600,000 acres of farmland in Oregon, which is over one-third of all the irrigated land in our state.

OWRC is supportive of different types of water reuse projects and recognizes increasingly frequent and severe droughts and population growth present challenges that cannot be solved by conservation alone. Today's water treatment and monitoring technologies make recycled and reclaimed water a viable water supply that could bridge demands for irrigation, manufacturing, and other water uses. Every drop of water that is reused helps relieve pressure on constrained surface and groundwater supplies, reduces energy use and related expenses to communities and individuals, and creates additional opportunities for innovative water quality improvement projects and other environmental benefits.

HB 2765 is a narrow but important proposal that removes an outdated technical barrier to South Suburban Sanitary District's (SSSD) innovative wastewater reuse project. The bill would allow SSSD, located in Klamath Falls, to discharge clean, cold water to the Klamath River before recycling that water for the benefit of wildlife refuges and communities downstream, once the scheduled upgrades to their treatment plants are completed. HB 2765 would fix a technicality in existing state law that prevents the District from legally directing what happens to its treated wastewater once it reaches the Klamath River.

The mission of the Oregon Water Resources Congress is to promote the protection and use of water rights and the wise stewardship of water resources

The Klamath Basin has faced multiple years of severe drought, with limited or no water supplies decimating agriculture, communities, and the environment, including the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. HB 2765 would allow SSSD to reuse its treated wastewater to benefit the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, using the Klamath River as a natural conveyance system. Currently, SSSD can legally supply treated wastewater to the Refuge, but without HB 2765 the district would have to eliminate its existing discharges to the Klamath River and, instead, reroute that water through a \$20 million, nine-mile pipeline. HB 2765 is the more rational, practical, and environmentally and fiscally responsible solution.

HB 2765 allows SSSD to meet their wastewater discharge requirements in a more cost-effective manner while also providing environmental and community benefits that otherwise may not occur. HB 2765 is a modern approach to an outdated legal barrier that unnecessarily limits wastewater reuse projects in Oregon. HB 2765, and other practical solutions like it, are essential to addressing Oregon's complex water challenges.

Please pass HB 2765 and support innovative uses of our water and wastewater.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,
April Snell
Executive Director