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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 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package

I have been involved in Oregon water resource issues for more than 4 decades. The proposal and work anticipated in HB 3124 is truly forward looking and critical for the future of Oregon's economy, ecological integrity, and critical services to citizens. The legislation will make significant steps to build resilience for Oregon's water future, bring water data into the 21st century, support smart water management, and protect and restore our waters for their ecological values.

Having been involved in the planning for water and wetland resources in the Harney basin for the last decade, I am particularly interested in the elements of the bill that:

- Supports local place-based planning for Oregon's water future.
- Makes data more available for the public.
- Assures all Oregonians have access to clean drinking water.
- Protects and modernizes water management for agriculture.
- Ensures water for aquatic life and provides increased access for fish to Oregon's streams by supporting improved fish passage.
- Provides investment funds for water projects allowing for matching funds necessary to capture federal funding. The current proposal to implement a CREP program to address groundwater over appropriation in the Harney Valley is a specific case in point where state funding can leverage federal funds at a 20% state to 80% federal funding ratio.

The cochairs of the committee are to be commended for bringing a forward thinking package at this time when many areas are struggling with water supply limitations, changing timing of water availability, water quality degradation, and altered stream systems. The future economic and ecological viability of Oregon is dependent on water. The complexity and massive differences in distribution of precipitation across Oregon requires careful consideration of the differences of water resource availability in local areas. This package is a down payment in a better future for Oregonians.

Sincerely,


Kenneth F. Bierly