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April 4, 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 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package

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

I am writing on behalf of Owyhee Irrigation District (OID) to express staunch support for House Bill 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package proposed by Representative Helm and Representative Owens. I particularly want to highlight the importance of provisions that provide match funding for irrigation districts to unlock federal dollars for irrigation modernization projects and help districts like ours be more resilient to drought and water scarcity.

The Owyhee Irrigation District (OID) serves the Bureau of Reclamation's Owyhee Project's Mitchell Butte and Dead Ox Flat Divisions. OID supplies water to approximately 67,200 acres and manages over 500 miles of open canals, drain ditches and pipelines. In recent years, the District has faced droughts that limit water supply to irrigators.

OID was established in 1910 and delivers water to 1300+ water users that grow sugar beets, onions, potatoes, tree fruit, wheat, alfalfa, pastures for livestock operations and various other food production operations. Much of the infrastructure that the district relies on is over 90 years old, inefficient, and increasingly expensive to annually operate and maintain. The modernization projects the district is pursuing will allow for benefits like increased water efficiency, improved water quality, enhanced stream flows, and more reliable water deliveries to patrons.

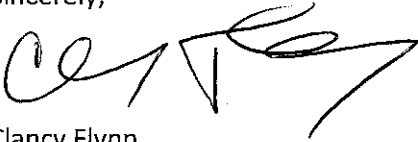
Oregon has faced several years of severe droughts, including some of the worst on record, and the detrimental impacts are being felt throughout the state, including in our region. Without access to reliable water deliveries, farmers are unable to grow crops and produce the food and fiber that we all rely on. This not only affects our economy, but also our food security and, especially in rural communities, our way of life. OID water users have faced drought conditions five out of the last ten years. With a combined reduction to allotments of 12.4AF/ac or about 62% in those five years. These water shortages and limited water supply are exacerbated due to the aging state of the District's conveyance system which does not efficiently deliver water. The District's open

canals and laterals make it difficult to fully meet its obligations to patrons and difficult to deliver the correct amount of water to patrons at the correct time (OID 2018).

To implement large-scale, multi-benefit projects to modernize irrigation infrastructure and be more resilient to drought, many districts, including ours, have utilized federal programs such as NRCS's Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations or Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART for support. These programs play a key role in planning, designing, and implementing projects, but still require some portion of project funding to come from non-federal sources. Our district is committed to modernizing our system, but we require state funding to meet match requirements for implementing identified projects in 2023-2025 and beyond. Bill 3124 contains the match funding districts need to fully utilize and leverage the infrastructure dollars that the federal government has made available.

I urge you to support the important funding components in HB 3124 and ensure that state match funding for irrigation modernization projects remains a part of the final bill. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clancy Flynn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Clancy Flynn
OID General Manager