



February 8, 2024

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

**Subject: Testimony in Favor of House Bill 4049—a Bill to Study Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) Substances Found in Biosolids that are Land Applied to Agricultural Fields in Oregon.**

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Please accept this testimony in support of HB4049 on behalf of the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (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 agricultural producers that has long been regarded in Oregon as the preferred sustainable management practice. Harnessed as a nutrient rich organic soil amendment, biosolids provide multiple environmental and economic benefits to farms and communities. Biosolids land application practices are strictly regulated to protect human health, soils, crops, groundwater, and surface waters based on the latest soils, crop science and other published research studies. However, the data have not yet been developed for PFAS—a group of toxic chemicals of growing concern for human health risks.

Monitoring data collected in Oregon by state agencies and local governments to date have not indicated PFAS contamination levels that are cause for immediate statewide action. However, it is important for Oregon to understand what happens to the levels of PFAS found in biosolids that are land applied on agricultural lands. Nationwide, PFAS studies currently underway do not capture the unique conditions found here in Oregon, such as relatively low concentrations of PFAS combined with rich and diverse agricultural conditions. The studies we are aware of will not provide information that is relevant to Oregon, which is needed to inform Oregon policy makers and to assist wastewater utilities and farmers in making well informed biosolids management decisions.

Because PFAS sources, concentrations, and the receiving environment vary significantly across the state, a “one-size-fits-all” approach to regulate these contaminants is not appropriate, nor is the application of data derived elsewhere in the nation to make decisions for Oregon. HB 4049 would help Oregon fill this information gap because it will fund the Oregon-specific research needed to inform appropriate site-specific actions to address PFAS contaminants if and where they are found at a level that is cause for concern.

HB 4049 would provide \$740,000 directly to Oregon State University Soil and Agricultural Sciences researchers to conduct a study to better understand the occurrence and distribution of PFAS found in biosolids that are land applied across the state. I want to emphasize that participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, arranged by ACWA as a collaboration of wastewater utilities and the agricultural producers that land apply their biosolids, and that the reports developed for this project will not include names or specific locations of participating farms or wastewater utilities.

For your reference, we have also submitted to the record a document on behalf of a coalition of supporters that provides additional background information on HB4049, a fact sheet on biosolids management in Oregon, and ACWA's white paper on PFAS.

We urge your support for HB 4049 and we are available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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