



February 12, 2025

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens
House Agriculture, Land Use and Water Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs Helm, Owens and Members of the Committee:

The Special Districts Association of Oregon represents approximately 950 districts across the state. Our membership is composed of 32 different types of districts, several of whom provide drinking water to the citizens of our state. The League of Oregon Cities, representing 241 cities across the state. Combined our two associations provide municipal drinking water most of the state and we would like to express our support for HB 3121, that would complete the training center at the Oregon Association of Water Utilities.

Oregon, and much of the country is facing a workforce shortage for individuals specializing in water and wastewater treatment. Largely due to an aging workforce, our communities across the state are struggling to find and hire trained and certified operators who ensure the proper treatment and operation of our water treatment and wastewater treatment facilities in the state, thereby contributing to the safety and welfare of our state's citizens.

In 2023, the Legislative Assembly recognized this challenge by providing needed funding to the Oregon Association of Water Utilities to build a training facility in Independence Oregon. This facility once completed will be able to provide hands-on experience to assist in the training of operators both in person and remotely to become certified operators. However, there is a need for additional funding to complete and equip this innovative facility.

Furthermore, the bill would direct the Department of Administrative Services to enter a contract with Oregon Association of Water Utilities, or a third party, to provide technical assistance, to address the needs and vulnerabilities of small and very small community water systems. There are approximately 812 of these systems in Oregon that serve a population of 3,300 and less. These systems oftentimes struggle due to the lack the personnel, experience and resources to maintain and operate these systems and addressing these challenges will hopefully ensure their safe operation and provide the support they need to continue to provide safe drinking water and ensure that wastewater is treated in a manner that is protective of human health and the environment.

Thank you for your consideration and please support HB 3121.

Sincerely:

Mark Landauer
Special Districts Association of Oregon

Michael Martin
League of Oregon Cities