



February 24, 2025

Senator Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR. 97301

RE: Oppose SB 427

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife:

I write on behalf of the Joint Water Commission (JWC) and the City of Hillsboro to express our strong opposition to SB 427. The Joint Water Commission, a partnership between the cities of Hillsboro, Forest Grove, and Beaverton and the Tualatin Valley Water District, is the primary drinking water source for Washington County and serves over 500,000 residents.

The State of Oregon has taken recent actions to severely limit access to new water rights for municipalities. After OWRD approved new groundwater rules severely limiting access to groundwater on the east side of the state and ODFW applied for 290 instream water right applications severely limiting access to new water rights on the west side of the state, water right transfers remain the **only** water management tool available to manage existing water rights. Transfer applications are essentially any amendment that a water right holder needs to make to an existing water right (water rights already held by cities and special districts).

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: SB 427 prohibits the approval of proposed water right transfers that diminish streamflow. The measure applies to applications filed and changes proposed on or after January 1, 2026.

IMPACTS TO DRINKING WATER UTILITIES: The language proposed in this measure will result in the **denial** of transfers and amendments to all water rights for drinking water that serve our communities including those for fire flow protections, schools, hospitals, homes and our local businesses.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE IMPACT: The Joint Water Commission (along with many other utilities in Oregon) is working on improving its drinking water infrastructure for seismic and wildfire resiliency. To maintain our communities' water supply during these construction projects, a new intake will be built adjacent to the existing intake. The Joint Water Commission and its member agencies will need to transfer the point of diversion on our certificated water rights to the new intake once it's complete. Those transfers would be denied under SB 427.

THE STATE ALREADY HAS TOOLS TO PROTECT STREAMFLOW:

OWRD, ODFW, and ODEQ currently have many existing tools that they may use at their discretion to protect streamflow in Oregon. Those tools include instream water rights, the application of fish persistence conditions to municipal water rights, the review and approval of water management and conservation plans, and municipal water measurement requirements.

We respectfully urge you to reconsider the provisions of SB 427 and work collaboratively with local governments and other water users to identify solutions that address Oregon's water challenges without putting our communities' existing water rights at risk. We are committed to continuing our work with the state to ensure that Oregon's water resources are managed responsibly and sustainably.

Sincerely,

Niki Iverson
General Manager, Joint Water Commission
Director, City of Hillsboro Water Department