

April 10, 2025

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
Oregon Legislature

RE: Testimony in Opposition to SB 1154

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing over 6,500 family farms and ranches that produce more than 220 agricultural commodities. From hops and hazelnuts to cattle, cranberries, and timber with operations spanning from just a few acres to thousands, our members utilize all farming methods including organic, conventional, regenerative, biotech, and even no-tech. My name is Ryan Krabill, and this testimony in opposition to SB 1154 is on behalf of OFB.

We appreciate the work that has gone into addressing concerns around drinking water and groundwater quality and we recognize the complexity and importance of the issues involved. As are the hundreds of others who have taken the time and energy to convey their opinions on this bill, we are committed to clean water and sustainable land stewardship and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the public dialogue.

SB 1154 is sprawling. On April 2, it more than doubled in length to 83 pages when the -1 amendment was introduced. Our preliminary analysis finds that it spans 44 sections, amends more than a dozen statutes, and empowers six different state agencies with new overlapping authorities. It establishes new groundwater classifications, creates multi-agency enforcement powers, and enables restrictions on land use, farm practices, and existing water rights. And all of this appears to be triggered by a declaration that can be made without local consent and based on an unclear standard. **The sheer size and scope of the bill combined with the compressed timeline of its consideration has created an environment that is not conducive to a methodical, deliberate policy development process that such a bill deserves and, in fact, requires.**

Ultimately, the evident complexity of such a massive undertaking makes us very uncomfortable because, to be candid, we simply have not had the time to adequately understand it. In this context, we would be doing our members a disservice if we did not elevate our initial concerns.

One tangible example worth highlighting for the committee is Section 19, subsection (1) of the -1 amendment which is the current bill under consideration. It gives authority to DEQ to access private property to inspect wastewater systems.

SECTION 19. (1) After a declaration of a ground water quality management area under ORS 468B.180, the Department of Environmental Quality may enter on to private property at reasonable times to inspect residential subsurface sewage disposal systems or alternative sewage disposal systems in the area. Before carrying out an inspection under this section, the department shall give notice of the inspection to the property owner and any tenant residing at the property and take reasonable steps to arrange a convenient time for the inspection with the resident of the property.

In the original bill, similar language is found in Section 18, subsection (1). In an interim draft shared with stakeholders around March 27, this language was absent altogether – as stakeholders, we were encouraged as it seemed to positively reinforce our engagement and feedback. Today, however, that problematic language reappears in Section 19 of the -1 amendment. **Regardless of intent, anecdotal episodes of procedural inconsistencies such as this erode our confidence and feed our general discomfort.**

Aside from the process-related concerns outlined above, **we are alarmed by the bill's general shift away from a risk-based, science-driven approach toward one guided more by the precautionary principle.** It grants DEQ, ODA, and WRD the authority to act preemptively, even in the absence of conclusive data, and it does so with little recourse for the landowners affected. Agricultural producers can have their existing water rights curtailed, their land use restricted, their wells inspected without notice, and their farming practices reclassified as pollution—without ever having caused contamination. That is not a recipe for sound policy—it's a formula for mistrust and conflict.

In conclusion, we are deeply concerned with this legislation due to its sweeping scope, significant complexity, and far-reaching consequences for all Oregonians. Protecting Oregon's groundwater is a matter of utmost importance, and it demands deliberate policymaking anchored in transparency among the many and varied stakeholders across our state. The Oregon Farm Bureau remains fully committed to being a constructive and engaged participant in this critical conversation, and we respectfully urge that the process moving forward includes our voice in a meaningful way.

Sincerely,



Ryan J. Krabill
Oregon Farm Bureau