

Submitter: Alai Reyes-Santos
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Chairs Senator Kate Lieber y Representative Tawna Sanchez, Cochairs Senator Fred Girod, Representatives David Gomberg y Greg Smith, and members of the committee,

I am Dr. Alai Reyes-Santos. I teach as a Professor of Practice at University of Oregon School of Law and live in rural Lane County. Over the past five years, engaging Tribal communities, environmental organizations, state agencies, and community-based organizations in conversations about our water challenges-and how they impact our most vulnerable and under-served communities-has clarified water priorities in the state. One priority we always hear is: give funding, research and educational tools, technical assistance to communities who are ready to address water scarcity and water quality challenges in ways that make sense to our low income, rural, communities, and honors regionally and culturally specific ways to steward water. Oregonians daily experience lack of clean and healthy water at home, work, in recreational sites, while fishing, swimming, and farming, and while honoring their cultural, spiritual and ceremonial relationships with water. You can see reports regarding these realities at www.oregonwaterfutures.org.

The Water Equity Fund has been a modest and yet accessible and effective tool to provide some resources and have immediate impact in communities and water. The first state allocation funded nine projects positively impacting Tribal restoration of water ways in Wallowa and Clatsop Counties; emergency preparedness and response in the Portland Metro area; youth leadership and workforce development in the water sector across the whole state; food security and food sovereignty in Clatsop, Klamath, and Jackson Counties. The second allocation is currently supporting Tribal Water Empowerment Awards through a Portland State University-University of Oregon collaboration; two workforce development and water stewardship projects with youth and elders in Lane, Linn, and Klamath Counties; and the development of videos on water law, policy and infrastructure between with Oregon State University to support communities, lawmakers, policy makers and state agencies working with the most vulnerable communities when drought, heat waves, pollution, storms, and wildfires jeopardize water access and quality. Accessible information about Tribal water projects, groundwater, water affordability, well water safety, rainwater harvesting, and renters' rights during water emergencies have been identified by all stakeholders across the state as priority projects.

We appreciate your support for the Water Equity Fund through HB 3528 that with a renewed and increased allocation can support both short-term and long-term projects

and allow us to reach more communities. Our outreach will continue to connect with communities across the whole state, including targeted engagement with Tribal, low income, and rural communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities. This is a highly accessible Fund that others already admire in the nation and internationally. This is a true Oregon innovation in state water investments and collaborations with communities. Let's keep showing others what it means to truly engage and support the most impacted communities wishing to increase their resiliency and do their best for our collective, shared, water futures.