

Date: April 30th, 2025

To: House Committee on Rules

Subject: Support HB 3525-A

Chair Representative Bowman, Vice Chairs Representatives Drazen and Pham and members of the committee,

I am Dr. Alai Reyes-Santos, and I am here because, along with many others, as a researcher, I have spoken with renters across the whole state: North, East, West, South. I also was a renter for a decade and now rely on a rural well as a homeowner. I am here to support HB 3525 because renters deserve access to safe drinking water.

Limiting well water testing to only groundwater management areas or areas of concern is not exactly what some of us had wanted but having wells tested is a significant step in the right direction. Gathering this data will also support property owners who may not be aware of the need for regular testing and provide them with necessary information to remediate before costs become too high. It can also give them peace of mind to know that there are no issues with the water they provide to tenants; as well as give them time to access existing funding and resources to support well remediation or replacement if needed.

A water test on a regular basis is also a relatively smaller cost to pay compared to having to completely, unexpectedly, replace a well because of an unknown and unaddressed issue in the long run. Most people including landlords simply do not know how their wells can be impacted by a variety of issues; this bill ensures that, at least in some areas already facing documented water challenges, they do get to receive that information on regular intervals and make informed decisions, as well as give tenants the information they need to decide if they feel comfortable drinking their water, or must remediate their drinking water, or drink bottled water.

Currently, there are no requirements for testing well water in rental properties, leaving many tenants unknowingly at risk of exposure to contaminants like arsenic, E. coli, and nitrates.

Renters are one of our most vulnerable demographics. This is why community advocates, researchers, and agency staff have agreed that renters' water rights is a priority issue for the state through the Oregon Water Policy Framework. Below, I share quotes from renters who have spoken on the fears they face because they do not know if they should be concerned about their well water.

- Safe drinking water is a basic necessity.
- Renters deserve the same protections as homeowners and those on public water systems.

- Oregon law requires landlords to maintain habitable rental properties, including access to safe drinking water ([ORS 90.320](#)). Right now, this does not include drinking water from domestic wells.
- HB3525 A strengthens habitable rental property requirements by making well water testing a legal requirement, ensuring tenants are not unknowingly exposed to contaminated water.

Most of the time renters do not receive information about water quality, especially those on well water. When their water smells or looks weird, or makes them and their families sick, how can they know if it is safe to consume? What about contaminants that cannot be perceived by smell or sight but have serious documented health impacts across Oregon? Should tenants spend money they often do not have on bottled water, as most people do? Asking property managers and owners to test water often feels terrifying. Will they be seen as troublesome tenants for asking? Will their lease not be renewed? In a state where affordable housing is limited everywhere, will they have to pay more rent elsewhere, while already struggling to make ends meet, just for asking for a water test?

Is it fair that because someone cannot afford to buy a home, that they do not get to know if their water is safe for their families, children, the elderly? That is a question for those of us who can afford our own home, or receive information about our water quality, or can afford our own test for our well water.

HB 3525 would ensure that landlords in Groundwater Management Areas and Areas of Concern test their well water regularly and share the results with tenants, allowing them to make informed decisions about their health and safety. This bill is a step towards transparency in well water quality reporting and community health as it strengthens existing housing laws and aligns with Oregon's broader efforts to protect groundwater and public health.

Having information about well water is good also for property owners and businesses. It can find a problem before it gets more expensive to solve it; it can give time to access existing funding and resources to support remediation.

Moreover, when testing confirms that there are no health hazards in groundwater, both property owners and tenants can be assured that there are no concerns; and that they do not have to spend on bottled water-which most people, including landlords/landladies, do in rural areas-or other remediation. I have personally witnessed such positive impact on both tenants and landlords.

Not to mention that water testing will provide the necessary benefit of supporting overall watershed health with more accurate data, and the housing, economic, and food production activities that need healthy groundwater.

Safe drinking water should not be a privilege, it is a basic right. I urge you to support HB 3525 to ensure that all renters in Oregon have access to safe drinking water and transparent water quality information.

"Yes, it would get infected. The same happened to me, I'd get itchy and I thought it was the soap or what we used; the shampoo and no, I tried and changed everything, and I think it's the water because the water looks kind of yellow."

"we buy bottles of water because the water isn't good or we have to bring our gallons to have them refilled because the water doesn't work here."

"By the houses over there, the water wasn't good and it was -- it wasn't good to drink and it would stain the bathrooms and all that; it would leave them with a yellowish color, dirty."

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

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Researcher and Consultant