



Date: April 6, 2021

TO: The Honorable Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Water

FROM: André Ourso, Administrator
Center for Health Protection, Public Health Division
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: House Bill 2594 – Testimony

Chair Helm and members of the committee; I am André Ourso, Administrator of the Center for Health Protection, Public Health Division at the Oregon Health Authority. While OHA has no position on HB 2594, I am here to comment on OHA's role in drinking water regulation and to answer any questions the committee may have related to our role.

The Drinking Water program within the Public Health Division regulates public drinking water systems to ensure compliance with state rules and standards. Our agency also has primacy for implementing the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in Oregon in lieu of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

In addition to our regulatory role, we also receive funding from US EPA to implement a voluntary source water protection program. Oregon's program is implemented as a partnership between OHA and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Our source water protection program works to assess potential contaminant sources within watersheds or near groundwater wells and encourages public water systems to develop source water protection plans to mitigate potential risks associated with contaminant sources. We also implement a small grants program that funds various source water protection projects.

OHA and our partners at DEQ work with state and federal land managers, including the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), to encourage practices that are protective of sources of drinking water and to coordinate source water protection activities. OHA also has an annual coordination meeting with ODF to discuss any issues of mutual concern.

This bill would provide for a formal consultative role for OHA and DEQ as the Board of Forestry evaluates rules governing streams and tributaries that serve as a source of drinking water. This formal consultation would further enhance the coordination between our respective agencies related to drinking water protection.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.