

**Testimony to the House Committee on Water
On House Bill 2344**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports HB 2344.

Across the country, in rural and urban areas, there has been a dramatic increase in sewer system clogs and consequent equipment damage. This increase is in great part related to the flushing of wet wipes in both household and public toilets. Wet wipes twist together to form "rag mats" and "ropes" that are impossible to untangle. Jammed together in sewer pipes, tangled in pumps or blocking screens and other filtration equipment, these wads of waste materials can create public health hazards by causing sanitary sewer overflows or damaging septic systems.

There is no simple, easy way to remove the clogs. Clearing requires workers to be exposed to hazardous situations when clearing the obstructions and utilities are faced with increased labor costs. Sometimes the clogs damage equipment or equipment is damaged in the process of removing the clogs, increasing equipment costs for the utility.

By requiring manufacturers or retailers to place "Do Not Flush" labels and warning statements in visible locations on packages containing most types of wet wipes, HB 2344 educates consumers about the proper means for disposing of used wet wipes. HB 2344 is consistent with the INDA/EDANA Code of Practice 2nd edition (published 2018), which was agreed upon by both product manufacturers and wastewater services sector trade organizations.

Small, medium and large wastewater utilities as well as septic-based wastewater systems face economic, labor and public health challenges from the improper disposal of used wet wipes.

OEC supports HB 2344 as a means for helping to reduce the negative impacts of wet wipes on wastewater systems.