

**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land and Water
On HB 4061**

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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 supports HB 4061 as amended.

This bill gives the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) slightly expanded enforcement authority as well as requiring water statements for hauled water, and increasing fines for illegal water use related to cannabis grow operations. This is as it should be, illegal water use for cannabis production is clearly a violation of state water law. However, the scope of the illegal water use problem in Oregon is larger than that associated with cannabis production.

OEC urges this committee and the legislature as a whole to consider future legislation that will expand the Department's authority to enforce against all illegal water use. Increased demands are being placed on our rivers, streams and groundwater aquifers, and the impacts of those demands are being exacerbated by drought and changes in precipitation patterns across the state. Due to lack of data we are only beginning to understand the true condition and extent of our groundwater supplies, and we still do not have accurate data for all our surface water systems. Illegal water use, whether in areas that rely on groundwater or those reliant of surface water, will have negative impacts for all legitimate water users in those areas.

We understand that the short session does not allow for the sustained and thoughtful conversations needed to expand the Department's enforcement authorities across the board. In the short-term OEC urges this committee to support HB 4061 as amended; in the long-term we look forward to working with the legislature, OWRD and other stakeholders to build out the Department's ability to enforce against illegal water use of any kind.