



**College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric  
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Representative Ken Helm

Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Dear Representative Helm and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these public comments in support of proposed House Bill 3124. My comments focus on my support of component 2-5, State Climatologist.

I serve as director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI), which is hosted by the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University. OCCRI was created in 2007 under House Bill 3543. OCCRI seeks to achieve a climate-prepared state and region by building a climate knowledge network, cultivating climate-informed communities, and advancing understanding of regional climate, its effects, and adaptation. The Oregon Climate Service (OCS), the office of the State Climatologist of Oregon, is embedded within OCCRI.

The State Climatologist and OCS provide and interpret data on climate and climate change for diverse users, including state agencies, local governments, the Governor's office, the media, and industry partners. During and following climate-related extremes and hazards, such as droughts, heat waves, wildfires, and ice storms, OCS serves as a trusted, expert source of information and context. For example, OCS provided data and technical advice to staff during development of Oregon's 2021 workplace heat and smoke rules. As another illustration, the State Climatologist is a member of the Oregon Drought Readiness Council, which advises the Governor's office on county-level requests for state-issued drought declarations. These declarations affect issuance of emergency water-use permits, transfers of water diversions, and other forms of support. In a typical month, OCS staff are quoted in more than a dozen stories carried by myriad media outlets, from *The Oregonian* and Oregon Public Broadcasting to *Associated Press* and Fox Weather.

Research and engagement on climate and climate-related extremes with the public, agencies, and local organizations aids in equitable hazard preparation and risk mitigation, and assists the state in preparing for long-term water scarcity. The State Climatologist serves as chair of the Oregon Drought Monitor Advisory Committee, which issues weekly consensus recommendations on classification of drought to the national author of the U.S. Drought Monitor. Furthermore, OCS actively collaborates with entities such as the Oregon Water Resources Department and Department of Forestry, Oregon's three National Weather Service offices, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, numerous Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and state climate offices throughout the United States. These strong relationships help to ensure that both within and outside Oregon, the state's water supply and other conditions are represented accurately and contribute to regional coordination and leveraging of federal resources and funds.

The Oregon Legislature responded to the demand for OCS expertise by allocating funds under Senate Bill 5561 during the December 2021 special session. These funds enabled OCS to greatly expand its core functions. For instance, in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's AgriMet program, OCS is leading a working group of state, federal, and university representatives to coordinate enhancement of Oregon's drought monitoring network via strategic investments in the state's weather, climate, and soil observation system. The increased capacity of OCS also allows for its staff to enhance diverse higher-education programs that emphasize research, education, and service.

The livelihoods, cultural identity, and well-being of Oregon's residents and visitors continues to be challenged by extreme climate-related events and climate change. The number of state, public, and media requests for rapid and sustained engagement by OCS on these topics only has increased. Collation, synthesis, analysis, and communication of data and information on the state's weather and climate is essential to individual, community, and government-led preparedness and resilience efforts. Therefore, I fully support proposed House Bill 3124 and component 2-5, State Climatologist.

Please let me know if you would like additional information. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

*Erica Fleishman*

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