



**To:** Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and Members of the House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee

**From:** Michael Martin, The League of Oregon Cities; Jessica Dorsey, Chair, Oregon Water Utilities Council; Mark Landauer, Special Districts Association of Oregon.

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The League of Oregon Cities (LOC), the Oregon Water Utilities Council (OWUC) of the Pacific Northwest Section of the American Water Works Association (PNWS-AWWA), and Special Districts Association of Oregon are writing in ***strong support of the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package*** (House Bill 3124) led by Chair Representative Ken Helm and Vice Chair Representative Mark Owens. The reality is persistent and severe drought conditions have become a new normal across the western United States and working together collaboratively and proactively is essential to Oregon's success in meeting the challenges we face.

Despite emergency relief allocated during a recent special legislative session and subsequent action by the Joint Emergency Board, Oregon continues to grapple with serious water security concerns across the board. From overallocation of water resources to aging infrastructure and threats to community drinking water sources. LOC, OWUC, and SDAO are grateful for the proactive approach taken through the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package that will ensure long-term resilience areas of interest.

### **Water/Sewer Low-Income Ratepayer Assistance**

Drinking water and sewer rate affordability has been a long-standing challenge, further compounded by the pandemic. Water and sewer infrastructure investments are critical for the protection of public health and the environment, as well as for public safety (including fire suppression), community livability, housing supply and economic development. As a result of decreasing investment from the federal government, combined with the rising cost of infrastructure, the local cost impacts (i.e. water/sewer/stormwater rates) associated with necessary water-related infrastructure has become unaffordable for many Oregonians.

### **Place-Base Planning**

LOC, OWUC, and SDAO support the continuation of place-based planning framework which provides funding for voluntary, locally driven planning processes that will enable communities across the state to address complex water-related challenges and opportunities. The identification of needs at the local level and among diverse stakeholder interests can result in the

development of innovative partnerships and sound solutions in order to tackle some of the more complex water related challenges across our state.

## **Reuse**

LOC, OWUC and SDAO support efforts to address regulatory barriers and develop technical assistance resources to support new and expanded beneficial reuse/recycling and land application of reclaimed wastewater in Oregon. State agencies have developed rules and guidance to process proposals for recycled water and other beneficial applications of reclaimed water, but communities across the state struggle to implement projects under the current regulatory framework.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package and for your work in securing Oregon's water future.

Respectfully,

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League of Oregon Cities

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Chair, Oregon Water Utilities Council

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