



**Mid-Columbia  
Community  
Action Council**

**Mid-Columbia Community Action Council**  
Serving Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman Counties  
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February 9, 2023

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Owens, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of Mid-Columbia Community Action Council, I would respectfully ask you to support House Bill 3125, which will establish the Public Drinking Water and Sewer Ratepayer Assistance Fund, distributing much needed state financial assistance for water and sewer bill payments to help ensure low-income households have access to safe drinking water.

Mid-Columbia Community Action Council's Household Utilities Assistance Programs provide payment assistance for water, electricity, gas, sewer and garbage. These critical services helped prevent utility shutoffs and mitigated the risk of houselessness for 3,441 Hood River, Wasco and Sherman County community members in 2022. Our programs are funded through a variety of federal, state, and local sources to achieve this goal each year.

In 2021, through federal funding, our organization received \$122,415 to provide direct financial assistance for low-income families for their drinking water and wastewater bills. In a short amount of time, we have set up 11 vendor contracts with community water systems and wastewater systems in our region. As of today, we have assisted 328 families locally.

House Bill 3125 will build on the hard work undertaken to establish a program to distribute water and sewer bill payment assistance by investing state resources. It would use lessons learned from the federal program and expand access to Oregonians currently ineligible for assistance, including low-income Oregonians living in multi-family dwellings whose utilities are bundled with rent.

In closing, we would ask you to support House Bill 3125 and build on the success of the existing program, that has been providing an essential service to many low-income Oregonians. In our community, we are committed to helping prevent individuals from losing access to safe drinking water and wastewater.

Kenny LaPoint  
Executive Director  
Mid-Columbia Community Action Council