



February 13, 2023

Support for HB 3125

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

I am Kemp Shuey, Executive Director of Community Action in Washington County writing in support of House Bill 3125. In our community we provide services to low-income families in the areas of housing stability, homeless services, economic empowerment, family development, and early childhood. Today, I want to focus on a program set up by federal assistance to provide bill payment assistance for drinking water and wastewater services.

In 2021, our organization received \$1.14 million to provide financial assistance for this program. In a short amount of time, we have set up 9 contracts with community water systems and wastewater systems which covers over 90% of Washington County customers. We have distributed 100% of these funds in our community assisting 1,400 families locally with clean, safe drinking water.

Low-income water bill payment is still available in a few of our communities, but expansion of this service across Washington County is not possible without new investment.

Utility assistance provides tangible relief to the low-income residents of Washington County. One client, Roseann, shared the following with us, "I can't tell you enough how grateful I am to you and Community Action for helping me in this time of need. This has completely changed so much for me and relieved so much stress. I see a light at the end of the tunnel now. If there is anything at all I can do to pay it forward, please let me know."

House Bill 3125 will build on the hard work undertaken and invest state resources to allow us to continue to provide water and sewer bill payment assistance to people like Roseann. It also uses lessons learned from the roll out of the federal program to expand access to Oregonians currently ineligible for assistance – like low-income families living in multi-family dwellings whose utilities payments are bundled with rent.

In closing, I would ask you to support House Bill 3125. Together, let's make sure all Oregonians have affordable access to basic needs, like drinking water and wastewater.

Sincerely,
Kemp Shuey, Executive Director