

February 14, 2023

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

On behalf of Community Services Consortium (CSC), 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.

CSC is the state and federally recognized community action agency serving **Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties**. We serve low-income households living in every community in our tri-county service area. Many of our clients are elderly homeowners with homes that are not energy efficient and may have failing water systems. Most of our clients live on fixed incomes.

In 2021, through federal funding, our organization received water assistance funds from a number of our local communities, but this was not consistent nor sufficient to provide financial assistance for low-income families for their drinking water and wastewater bills across our entire area. We matched those funds with other federal funds we had set aside for this assistance but also with donations from the community at large and Community Services Block Grant Funds to assist these clients with client-side repairs to the water infrastructure systems to ensure their water service could remain active. Our rural communities are struggling to provide these services to residents of the communities, particularly if there are major repairs needed.

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.

Thank you,



Pegge McGuire,  
Executive Director