



To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Re: Support for HB 3343-1

April 4, 2023

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

Thank you for the chance to support HB 3343 -1 Amendment. My name is Zaira Sanchez, I'm Director of Community Organizing with Oregon Rural Action, a grassroots organization that has been working for more than a year with the community in the Lower Umatilla Basin *mientras que luchan por el derecho humano básico, al agua potable* - as they fight for the basic human right to safe water.

The current regulatory approach in the Basin, which relies on voluntary measures to control pollution, has left the water undrinkable and dangerous. This is now a public health emergency, as was first declared in Morrow County in June 2022 after door-to-door testing revealed people were drinking water containing up to five times the amount of nitrate considered dangerous by the EPA.

In 2011, DEQ officials informed the EQC that this voluntary approach appeared to be insufficient to protect groundwater, and following door-to-door testing over the past year, the EPA has told the State that this approach has failed to protect public health. However, this approach is still in place and failing to meet its mandate under state law to reduce nitrate levels below 7 mg/L, as it has failed since its adoption decades ago.

My team and I speak with people every week who have lived in the LUB for decades. They share their stories of miscarriages, of cancer, of lost loved ones, and of the pain they endure every day due to this issue. Yet even as the state has collected data and known of these high nitrate levels, they were not told the risk of drinking water from their own tap. This system is broken, and the people of the Lower Umatilla Basin are rightfully furious. To make this right, necesitan liderazgo estatal - they need state leadership.

HB 3343 -1 Amendment is a long-awaited step in the right direction toward overhauling the State's ineffective approach to protecting groundwater, and we encourage you to support this legislation and to support the LUB community as they continue their struggle to access safe water. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Zaira Sanchez
Oregon Rural Action