

**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources and Water
On HB 4128, -3**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

OEC strongly supports state funding for improving, replacing, and repairing the drinking water delivery systems and wastewater systems serving communities across Oregon. However, we are concerned with the manner in which HB 4128 -3 as written seeks to provide such funding.

First, the bill does not specifically state the type of water infrastructure projects that can be built with this funding. OEC seeks clarification for the public as to what kind of infrastructure will qualify. Requiring the projects to "support new residential housing" does not place sufficient sideboards on proposed projects. We do not support using this bill or other similar funding approaches to fund storage reservoirs or other water storage beyond the above-ground storage tanks used to hold water for municipal use.

Any storage project proposals should be required to go through the OWRD Water Project Grant and Loan Fund. That fund, established by SB 839 in 2013, established sideboards for the use of public funds for water storage projects, protecting the public's interest in the wise use of public funds by requiring important environmental benefits in return for access to such funds.

Second, while the bill as amended provides a list of communities whose projects would receive support through HB 4128 -3, the projects themselves are not described. Again, it is essential that there be transparency in the use of public funds, and therefore not only the recipients but also details of their projects should accompany this bill. This would allow members of the public to comment on specific funding details as the bill moves forward.

Third, OEC is concerned that the ongoing trend for the direct appropriation of state funds for specific infrastructure projects, such as included in this bill, will become standard operating procedure for avoiding the oversight and review provided not only by the Water Project Grant and Loan Fund but other public pots of money such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

Regarding HB 4128 -3, Section 2, Well Abandonment, Repair and Replacement Fund: In addition to the direct appropriations in HB 4128-3, Section 2 provides additional

funds to OWRD's Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund will allow that program to resume accepting applications from domestic well users for upgrades and improvements to their wells. The fund targets low-to-middle income households, thus assisting Oregon's most vulnerable rural homeowners in accessing safe drinking water. OEC strongly supports this provision of the bill.

Thanks you for this opportunity to comment on HB 4128 -3.