

January 21, 2025

To: Co-chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-chair McDonald and members of the House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water Committee

From: Karen Lewotsky, Water Program Director & Rural Partnerships Lead, Oregon Environmental Council

RE: support for HB 2168

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.

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports HB 2168.

HB 2168 provides for \$5M to support DEQ's Clean Water Loan Fund. The Clean Water Loan Fund provides financial support for households to repair or replace failing on-site septic systems. DEQ's January 2025 report, [Onsite Septic Financial Aid Program: Opportunities and Outcomes](#), details the many collaborative partnerships that have repaired or replaced over 519 septic systems across Oregon, mitigating wildfire damage, protecting sensitive watersheds, and benefiting low-and-moderate income households.

HB 2168 also provides \$5M to support OWRD's Water Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund (WARRF). WARRF provides financial assistance to help Oregonians repair, or replace and permanently abandon a household well that is unable to supply water for household purposes due to wildfires, groundwater contamination and/or declining groundwater levels.

Continued investment by the state legislature in these effective, affordable, and fiscally responsible programs will help preserve homeownership and promote housing stability, support local septic and well-drilling/well repair contractors, and result in healthier living conditions and communities.

Finally, HB 2168 provides OSU Extension with \$2.5M to conduct outreach for these programs with local landowners. Outreach from a trusted source like OSU Extension staff helps increase interest and participation in both programs.

OEC urges the committee to support HB 2168, and by doing so ensure safe, clean drinking water for rural Oregonians across the state, while protecting groundwater quality.