

To: House Committee for Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resource and Water
From: Dr Molly Kile, Resident of Benton County, OR
RE: Support of House Bill 2168

January 22, 2025

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB2168. This measure is crucial for safeguarding the health and well-being of peri-urban and rural Oregonians where municipal drinking water and sewer services are unavailable. Approximately 23% of Oregonians rely on private wells to provide their drinking water and roughly 30% of Oregonians rely on septic tanks to manage their waste

However, maintaining these systems presents significant challenges for homeowners. Many individuals lack access to trusted, expert guidance needed to manage and protect their drinking water and wastewater systems effectively. This gap in technical support leaves families vulnerable to health risks from contaminants such as arsenic, nitrate, and E. coli, which are all too common in Oregon's groundwater. People who drink water containing these contaminants are at an increased risk of health issues ranging from gastrointestinal disease to poor pregnancy outcomes such as stillbirth and preterm birth to several types of cancer (bladder, liver, and skin). The health risks posed by these chemicals are well understood and documented in the scientific literature and by our environmental protection agencies (EPA and ATSDR) which is why these are regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

As a scientist who has been involved in well water and health research in Oregon for the past 11 years, I have seen firsthand the need people have for reliable information and assistance to be able to manage their well water quality and septic tanks. Ensuring that private well owners have access to trusted, reliable resources for testing, maintaining, and improving their systems is critical for protecting public health.

This bill represents a vital investment in rural health. By increasing the budget for technical support, Oregon can empower residents to protect their families, prevent contamination, and manage their water and wastewater systems sustainably. I urge you to support this legislation and take a meaningful step toward improving health outcomes in Oregon's rural communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further insights or assistance in support of this bill.

Sincerely,
Molly Kile, ScD
Corvallis, OR