



To: Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
From: Commissioner Phil Chang

January 22, 2025

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2168 this morning.

In the Bend and Redmond area of the Deschutes Basin, groundwater levels have declined by 20 feet in the past 2 decades. In the two year period 2022-2023, over 200 rural Deschutes County residents reported their wells going dry.

Receiving technical assistance from OSU Extension could make this situation much less confusing and traumatic for rural homeowners and receiving financial assistance through the Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund could be incredibly helpful to low and moderate income rural residents as they grapple with quotes of \$30,000 to \$80,000 to drill a new, deeper well.

With costs like that, you can understand how we made quick use of the \$585,000 the Legislature allocated to address dry wells in Deschutes County in 2021 and you can understand how well deepening is absorbing the majority of federal CDBG funding allocated to keeping affordable rural homes online in the unincorporated County in this community.

Your support for HB 2168 would be greatly appreciated.

If I can also suggest a more upstream solution: I hope the Committee will also consider providing technical and financial assistance to homeowners on exempt domestic wells in communities with declining groundwater levels BEFORE their wells go dry.

In the Deschutes Basin, residential and municipal consumption is the primary use of groundwater and we have 17,000 exempt domestic wells in Deschutes County alone.

So spending just a few thousand dollars to incentivize a rural homeowner to overhaul the landscape around their home could reduce demand from that household by many thousands of gallons per week.

This would both reduce the likelihood that that homeowner's well would go dry and reduce stress on local groundwater resources, making it less likely that their neighbors wells would go dry.

Thank you for your efforts to help us address groundwater challenges across Oregon.

Phil Chang
Deschutes County Commissioner