

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources
On SB 830**

January 29 2025

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

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

Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports SB 830.

The Onsite Septic Financial Aid Program, managed by DEQ, has been providing financing for the repair/replacement of failing septic systems across Oregon. Despite the fact that the program currently provides loans to a limited range of septic-system dependent borrowers, the program has provided funding to over 510 households in 29 counties in the past 3 years.

SB 830 expands the reach of the program, by allowing it to offer not only loans but grant and other types of financial assistance including working through third parties like Craft 3. SB 830 will also broaden the kinds of septic users eligible for funding support – while currently the program is only available to single households, SB 830 will expand eligibility to include larger systems serving multi-family and multi-unit housing. A quick review of testimony supporting this bill will show that septic system repair and installation services from around Oregon see a deep need for this program's funding to be continued and extended as per SB 830.

Failing septic systems are an immediate threat to human health. They also present a clear threat to groundwater quality generally, and to any surface waters hydrologically connected to a contaminated groundwater source. Expanding this highly successful program to include more financial options and a wider range of household types is the smart way to build on that success.

OEC has worked at the intersection of human health and water quality for decades. Our experience shows us that more often than not it is low-income, rural and aging demographics that are most at risk from the health impacts of failing septic systems. We urge you to support the Onsite Septic Financial Aid Program's support for those communities by expanding the scope of the program.

OEC asks you to support SB 830.