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House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and members of the committee,

On behalf of the City of Portland's Public Works Service Area and Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), I am writing today to express our strong support for House Bill 2947, providing funding for Oregon State University (OSU) researchers to study perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in biosolids land application.

As a local wastewater and stormwater management agency, BES is committed to improving water quality in Portland and across Oregon and managing our natural resources responsibly. Our wastewater treatment processes recover resources from the water we use in our homes and businesses, helping to keep our community's rivers healthy and creating renewable resources for energy and agriculture.

HB 2947 would fund OSU to study the effects of PFAS in land applied biosolids on soil, water, and agricultural crops in select sites in Oregon. Municipalities and farmers have shared a long-standing partnership using treated organic materials collected and processed at municipal wastewater facilities as nutrient-rich fertilizers and soil conditioners. Biosolids contribute proven benefits to soil and crops. They also sequester carbon in soil, which is becoming increasingly important as a means to combat the impacts of climate change.

This biosolids PFAS study is needed because there is growing scientific evidence that exposure to PFAS substances may lead to a range of human health problems. This presents a significant challenge for wastewater treatment facilities, like BES, that receive PFAS pollution from industries, businesses, and households. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to treat complex chemicals like PFAS, which pass through to water and biosolids. Data collected in Oregon to date reflects that Oregon does not have the types of PFAS generating industries or the highly concerning levels of PFAS that have been found in other parts of the country. It is important, however, that cities, farmers, and regulators develop a better science-based understanding of the presence of PFAS in municipal biosolids and their impacts in the environment and on crops. HB 2947 will provide the funding needed to develop the science to inform future biosolids management practices in Oregon.

The City of Portland is very supportive of this study and urges you to support House Bill 2947.

Thank you,

Priya Dhanapal
Deputy City Administrator
Portland Public Works Service Area