



OREGON STATE SENATE

Testimony of Senator Khanh Pham

In Support of SB 747 – Getting the Facts on Fertilizer
Senate Natural Resources & Wildfire Committee
February 4, 2025

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, and I am honored to represent Senate District 23 in Northeast and Southeast Portland. I am here today in support of SB 747, a bill that establishes basic fertilizer reporting requirements for large farms in Oregon.

You may ask—why is a Portland Senator bringing forward a bill about fertilizer reporting? The answer is simple: Every Oregonian deserves the right to drink clean drinking water. This is a public health issue that particularly impacts the most vulnerable, including babies.

As a mother, I know what it means to prepare a bottle for my baby, and to cook meals for my family, with all of the love and carefulness that every child deserves. But for many moms and parents in areas with high nitrate in the well water, they have to worry that the formula they're feeding their babies, or the water they're using to cook or bathe their children, could be endangering them. Oregon's families deserve clean water, wherever we live. That's why I am moved to bring this bill forward today.

In 2023, I was invited by local community members to visit Boardman, where I met with families who have been dealing with contaminated drinking water for over 30 years. Mothers in Eastern Oregon have lived with bottled water for babies, for baths, for cooking for their families - for an entire generation. Much of the community affected are immigrant workers who speak languages other than English, and rural working class people of modest means, who work hard and pay their taxes but don't have lobbyists or fancy offices in Salem, and who need their government to be responsive to the essential need of safe drinking water. Nitrate pollution has put their health at risk, increasing cases of birth defects, miscarriage, thyroid issues, and cancer.

Fertilizer runoff has been named by DEQ as the #1 reason for this pollution. But because Oregon does not collect any data on fertilizer use, it's impossible for agencies to address the problem effectively. That is what SB 747 is about – getting more information on how much fertilizer is being applied by the largest operators, and so that we can understand how this might be contributing to the nitrate pollution that is making people sick.



KHANH PHAM
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 23

Oregon is not alone in dealing with this problem. This bill follows the trend of states and nations gathering more data about fertilizer use, such as Pennsylvania and New Zealand, and applies only to the largest farms over 200 irrigated acres. This would **exempt 90%** of Oregon's small family farms, while **covering 80%** of irrigated farmland. This is a balanced approach that seeks to gather more data about fertilizer use so that we can protect water, air, and climate while ensuring farmers have the resources they need to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

At the same time, I recognize that farmers feel vulnerable about new reporting requirements, and have questions about what this would mean for their operations. That's why SB 747 does not impose restrictions—it simply collects data so agencies can provide better technical support, improve efficiency, and prevent fertilizer waste.

Today, you will hear from community members who are directly impacted by nitrate pollution, as well as farmers who want to be part of the solution but are concerned about regulatory burden. My hope is that we can bridge these concerns and ensure that Oregon's water, farms, and communities can thrive together.

I appreciate the Committee's time and believe this issue deserves a public hearing so we can start better understanding and addressing this long-standing problem. Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions about legislative intent, and we have some folks testifying after me, including a retired DEQ administrator from the Eastern Oregon region, who can answer technical questions.