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Rhododendron Water Association

Providing tomorrow's water quality and reliability... Today

Date: February 5, 2025

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: Rhododendron Water Association

RE: Support for HB 3341 - \$5 million in funding for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Steven Graeper and I am President of the Rhododendron Water Association. As President of a small not-for-profit water system, I am constantly searching for opportunities and partners to assist our water system maintain the high quality of service our rate payors have become accustomed to.

I am writing today in support of H.B. 3341, which would provide an additional \$5 million in funding for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program for the upcoming biennium (2025-2027) to ensure the continuation of this valuable program. The OWEB Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program was established with broad bipartisan support in 2023 and plays a vital role in protecting the drinking water supply of small and rural communities across Oregon.

This bipartisan bill would help ensure secure and safe drinking water for communities in Oregon by providing additional funding for water suppliers to protect, restore, or enhance sources of drinking water through land acquisition and conservation.

As a recent applicant in the OWEB Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program, RWA knows far too well how much these funds can assist struggling small water systems protect the precious source water in their watersheds. When funding is secure, the program will assist the RWA system repay a \$50,000 obligation to the state that was used for the protection of our watershed.

There is great demand for this funding in Oregon. A recent survey by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board identified more than \$27 million in project funding needs over the next 5 years for communities across the state.

H.B. 3341 is also a key component of the 2025 Water Package and will provide meaningful support for many communities facing water insecurity. H.B. 3341 would help communities and water suppliers secure plentiful drinking water, increase resilience to climate change, and provide additional funding to protect water resources and public health.

Thank you,

Steven Graeper, President

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