

Submitter: Jim Strong  
On Behalf Of: Board of Directors  
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3121

Greetings Members of the Committee,

I write in support of HB 3121. I have served on the Board of Directors of the Christmas Valley Domestic Water Supply District, with which Co-Chair Owens is familiar, for the past 6-yrs. Our current water district operator has been employed by the District for 26-yrs and served as its operator for 17-yrs. In that time she has developed an excellent rapport with OAWU, the state's DEQ, Business Oregon (BizOR), and other partners to develop & maintain clean, safe, drinking water within our 4.4 square mile tax district serving approx. 440 connections. During my time of volunteering on the Board I have observed first-hand the benefits & expertise of the OAWU "circuit riders" to our district customers. Their service is invaluable.

Our water delivery system is largely 60-yrs old, first installed w/used materials. Beginning in 2010 the District, with the funds of a 30-yr BizOR loan/grant, has replaced the most problematic leak & failure sections of our water delivery system. To date, w/funding from currently three BizOR loan/grants and disbursement of Lake County ARPA funds and customer rate increases, our District has replaced approx. 12 aggregate miles of our 28-mile delivery system as well as repairs or replacement of our three well pumps. This aggressive approach to fund long-needed improvements has resulted in an annual water usage savings of nearly 18.5 million gallons (FY 22-23 to FY 23-24) according to the State's annual water usage report. OAWU's professional assistance has contributed greatly to our efforts. It is imperative that funding for OAWU be maintained, & increased whenever possible, in order to facilitate its programs which will continue to assist Districts such as mine.

In closing, our District fully supports passage of HB 3121 in its focus to improve & augment programs which will assist small, rural, & frontier water systems such as ours. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions.