



Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3527. Oregon REALTORS® is an industry association comprised of roughly 18,000 real estate brokers, principal real estate brokers, property managers, and affiliated industry professionals.

While housing payments are typically a household's greatest recurring cost, expensive utility bills are a significant burden. Some households are at risk of critical utility services being shut off and, without assistance, housing instability and homelessness. Oregon has long had programs to assist low-income Oregonians with energy bills. For water and sewer bills, roughly 18,600 Oregonians benefited by the pandemic-era federal Low-Income Household Water Assistance (LIHWA) Program, for which funds are now exhausted.<sup>1</sup> Creating a state-based program to continue providing this critical assistance is one more step we can take to improve housing stability for low-income Oregonians. Doing so will be far more cost-effective than addressing the fallout of a housing instability on the back-end.

Costs for water and sewer services have increased significantly in recent years and are likely to continue to increase due to needed infrastructure maintenance and improvements. It is likely that water and sewer costs will continue to rise faster than the wages of those paying the costs.

HB 3527 would establish and appropriate \$11,000,000 to the Public Drinking Water and Sewer Ratepayer Assistance Fund to help low-income households with the cost of paying their water and sewer bills. While the best long-term solution to housing stability is to build enough housing units to stabilize or lower housing costs, very low-income households will continue to need assistance with water and sewer costs under any realistic scenario.

Addressing our state's housing affordability crisis will require every tool in the toolbox. So, as the state strives to increase needed housing production, providing utility bill assistance to low-income households is a wise way to reduce the risk of housing instability and homelessness.

For these reasons, Oregon REALTORS® asks that you vote YES on HB 3527.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Action Partnership of Oregon Testimony on HB 3527  
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/129126>