



PUBLIC WORKS – ENGINEERING

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February 17, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Representative Ken Helm, Co-Chair
Representative Mark Owens, Co-Chair
House Committee on Agricultural, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the Committee:

Support for House Bill 3527

The City of Albany is writing in support of House Bill (HB) 3527. HB 3527 would provide funding for a state Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) similar to the program authorized and funded by the federal government in 2020. That program distributed funding to states, approximately \$14 million of which was provided to Oregon. Albany is a municipal provider of both drinking water and wastewater services to approximately 60,000 residents and participated in the federal LIHWAP program in partnership with our local provider, the Community Services Consortium. The federal program was successful and meaningful to our customers, many of whom spoke out when the federal funding was exhausted.

Albany provides assistance to low-income customers in two primary ways. We offer contracts and payment plans for water customers in arrears, and the City also provides a “lifeline” volume of water free to qualifying low-income customers each month. This program is paid for by a small surcharge on all residential drinking water accounts. While helpful, the City’s low-income assistance surcharge is not adequate to provide funding to pay for arrears before water service is disconnected or to pay the charges required to restart service. Those aspects of LIHWAP are a great complement to the City’s own program and will provide assistance above and beyond what current Albany ratepayers can provide.

The City of Albany strongly supports HB 3527 as one important part in maintaining access to safe drinking water for all Oregonians. The continuation of the positive impact the city experienced with the similar federal LIHWAP program will be beneficial for all of Albany’s water ratepayers, in particular those most at risk of losing their access to clean water. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Bailey
Public Works Director

CB:kc

c: Representative Shelly Boshart Davis, District 15 (via email Rep.shellyboshartdavis@oregonlegislature.gov)
Michael Martin, League of Oregon Cities (via email mmartin@orcities.org)