



February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owen and MacDonald, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Salem, Oregon. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$77 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 60,000 Oregonians in poverty, in addition to a range of emergency services that shelter the homeless and serve wildfire victims. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, and sit on the Housing Committee of the Governor's Racial Justice Council.

I write today to support **House Bill 3527**, which would create critical assistance for low-income families who are struggling to pay their water bill. These families are at risk of being disconnected from one of the most basic of necessities.

The Community Action Partnership of Oregon, our statewide association, in collaboration with Oregon Housing and Community Services, distributed more than \$10 million in federal water assistance in 2021, establishing vendor agreements with 268 water utilities across Oregon. MWVCAA alone distributed \$387,715 and \$134,199 in Low-Income Home Water Assistance across two federal funds. These federal supports have expired, but the water needs for low-income clients in Oregon remain acute. We are asking for your support in the creation of a state-funded program, based on the lessons we learned through our experience in the highly successful federal program.

Oregon, like much of the U.S., has seen rising costs for basic living expenses low-income families, these rising costs can make it difficult to pay for essential services like electricity, water, and heating. This is especially troubling for low-income communities, seniors, people with disabilities and families with children, who are especially vulnerable when it comes to paying for water. Many of our clients in Oregon live on fixed incomes, such as Social Security or disability payments, which do not keep up with inflation or the rising cost of living. Without assistance, they often need to make difficult choices, such as paying for essential water services, while other basic needs like food, healthcare, or housing are sacrificed.

Please join us in support of House Bill 3527. Water assistance in Oregon is critical to our low-income, senior, disabled, and vulnerable renter communities. Your support will help preserve the access to clean, safe drinking water for these Oregon families.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Jones  
Executive Director