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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 427 – Safeguarding Streamflows**

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire:

On behalf of Willamette Riverkeeper, we are writing to express our strong support SB 427, which provides essential protections for streamflows in Oregon's rivers, including the Willamette River and its tributaries. As an organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Willamette River system, we understand the critical importance of maintaining healthy streamflows to support fish and wildlife habitats, water quality, and recreational opportunities.

Oregon's rivers are currently facing unprecedented pressures from over-appropriated water rights, climate change, and increased demand from agriculture, industry, and residential development. SB 427 directly addresses these challenges by safeguarding streamflows to ensure that our rivers can continue to provide ecological, recreational, and economic benefits.

In an already over-appropriated water rights environment, it is crucial to protect senior water rights while also prioritizing streamflows for ecological health. SB 427 establishes a framework that respects existing water rights while ensuring that water transfers do not further deplete streamflows. This balanced approach is vital to preventing further ecological degradation, especially during increasingly frequent droughts and low-flow conditions.

Without this legislation, water transfers could significantly impact already stressed river systems, leading to **reduced water quality, degraded habitats for fish and wildlife, and diminished recreational opportunities**. Protecting streamflows, especially in unprecedented times of drought due to climate change, is essential for supporting the cultural and economic vitality of communities that rely on healthy rivers for fishing, boating, and tourism.

Willamette Riverkeeper owns and stewards properties along the Willamette Water Trail, a nationally recognized water trail spanning over 187 miles. Our properties provide critical public access for paddlers, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Declining streamflows directly impact recreational access, visitor experiences, and local economies that depend on river-based tourism - not only within the Willamette Basin, but across Oregon. Additionally, lower streamflows would compromise our restoration efforts, including native plantings and habitat improvements critical for fish and wildlife species.

This bill is not just about protecting water; **it's about safeguarding Oregon's natural heritage, cultural identity, and future generations' ability to connect with our state's iconic rivers.** By protecting streamflows, we ensure that Oregonians and visitors alike can continue to enjoy the "wild" experiences that define our state.

For these reasons, Willamette Riverkeeper urges you to support SB 427. We believe this bill strikes the necessary balance between maintaining water rights and safeguarding streamflows that sustain Oregon's rivers, communities, and ecosystems.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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