

City of Lafayette

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Testimony in Support of HB 3700

City of Lafayette

Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee,

The City of Lafayette strongly supports House Bill 3700, which would establish a process for certifying water and wastewater operators from nonreciprocal states. As a city that has struggled for years with permit compliance issues due in large part to workforce shortages, we believe this bill is critical to ensuring safe and sustainable water infrastructure for our community.

Like many municipalities in Oregon, we have found it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified drinking water and wastewater operators. One of the biggest barriers we face is the current certification reciprocity rules, which prevent us from hiring otherwise qualified operators from out of state. This has had a direct impact on our ability to remain in compliance with state and federal regulations.

A recent example underscores this challenge. The City of Lafayette conducted a search for a Public Works Director, requiring a Level 3 Wastewater-certified operator. We received three strong applications from out-of-state candidates, each of whom would have met our requirements if Oregon's certification process allowed for a 1:1 reciprocity match. Unfortunately, under the current system, these qualified professionals were unable to take the position, leaving us struggling to fill this critical role.

HB 3700 would provide a much-needed solution by directing the Environmental Quality Commission and the Oregon Health Authority to adopt rules allowing certification of operators from nonreciprocal states. This legislation would give cities like Lafayette the flexibility to hire the talent we need to maintain compliance and protect public health.

We urge the Legislature to pass HB 3700 to support local governments in building a skilled workforce, ensuring the sustainability of our water infrastructure, and protecting the health and well-being of Oregonians.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BD' with a flourish underneath.

Branden Dross
City Administrator
City of Lafayette