



*Columbia Spirit, Small Town Heart*

February 28, 2025

House Committee on Higher Education and  
Workforce Development  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Support for HB 3634 – Operator-in-Training and Water Workforce Program**

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala & Harbick, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the City of Irrigon, we express our strong support for House Bill 3634. This bill establishes the Water Workforce Program (Operator-in-Training) to address the critical need for drinking water and wastewater operators here in Irrigon and across the State of Oregon.

This is a critical need for those entrusted with maintaining our public infrastructure systems and we are grateful for the committee's time and support.

Reliable water infrastructure is essential for public health and community well-being, yet all of Oregon's cities face a growing crisis as a significant portion of the workforce nears retirement. Without trained replacements, Oregon risks disruptions to safe drinking water and wastewater services. HB 3634 is a proactive solution to recruit, train, and retain skilled professionals in this vital field.

We also appreciate the leadership of the Legislature's Water Caucus in championing investments in workforce development, and this committee's willingness to hold a public hearing addressing this critical issue.

We urge your strong support for HB 3634 and stand ready to collaborate on its implementation.

Respectfully,

Aaron Palmquist, MBA/PA, ICMA-CM  
City Manager  
500 NE Main Ave.  
Irrigon, OR 97844  
541-922-3385  
[aaron.palmquist@ci.irrigon.or.us](mailto:aaron.palmquist@ci.irrigon.or.us).