



# City of North Bend

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## MEMO

**TO:** House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

**DATE:** Monday, March 3, 2025

**FROM:** David A. Milliron, City Administrator

**RE:** Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 3634 and House Bill 3700

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

On behalf of the **City of North Bend**, I am submitting this written testimony to express our **strong support** for **House Bill 3634** and **House Bill 3700**—two essential pieces of legislation that will help address Oregon’s critical water and wastewater workforce challenges.

### Support for House Bill 3634 – Operator-in-Training and Water Workforce Program

The **City of North Bend**, like many Oregon communities, relies on skilled and certified **drinking water and wastewater operators** to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient water services for residents and businesses. However, we, along with municipalities across the state, face a growing crisis as a **significant portion of our workforce nears retirement** with limited pathways to recruit and train new professionals.

House Bill 3634 takes a **proactive approach** to this urgent issue by establishing an **Operator-in-Training Apprenticeship Program**, which will:

- Provide **funding and resources** for cities to **recruit, train, and retain** new drinking water and wastewater operators.
- Expand opportunities for **bilingual training**, ensuring equitable access to career pathways for diverse candidates.
- Support **internship and apprenticeship programs**, allowing municipalities to develop a pipeline of future professionals.
- Ensure **Oregonians have access to safe and clean drinking water and wastewater services** by investing in a workforce equipped to meet future challenges.

With increasing regulatory demands and the evolving complexity of water treatment technology, cities need **dedicated workforce development programs** to sustain critical infrastructure services. **HB 3634 is an investment in the future of Oregon’s water workforce and a necessary step to ensure uninterrupted public health and safety.**

### Support for House Bill 3700 – Expanding Drinking Water and Wastewater Reciprocity

In addition to expanding training opportunities, Oregon must also **increase access to qualified professionals** by addressing **workforce mobility and reciprocity** challenges. House Bill 3700 provides



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much-needed clarity for **out-of-state certified water and wastewater operators**, helping Oregon cities hire skilled professionals while upholding the highest industry standards.

Under current regulations, restrictive reciprocity rules **create unnecessary barriers** for highly trained individuals seeking to work in Oregon, **limiting the available labor pool** at a time when cities urgently need certified operators. HB 3700 will:

- **Streamline the process** for out-of-state applicants by clearly defining how their certifications align with Oregon's requirements.
- **Expand workforce availability** by allowing experienced professionals to enter the field **without redundant delays or procedural uncertainties**.
- **Help Oregon municipalities recruit and retain skilled drinking water and wastewater operators**, alleviating staffing shortages while maintaining rigorous health and environmental standards.

The **City of North Bend fully supports this legislative effort** to enhance workforce mobility and provide certainty for applicants and municipalities alike.

**Both HB 3634 and HB 3700 represent critical investments** in the future of Oregon's water infrastructure and workforce. Without action, our cities will continue to struggle with recruitment challenges that could compromise public health, economic development, and environmental safety. **By supporting these bills, the Legislature will ensure that Oregon has a robust, well-trained workforce to meet the increasing demands of the drinking water and wastewater industries.**

The **City of North Bend urges the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development to pass HB 3634 and HB 3700**. We appreciate your leadership and commitment to addressing this critical workforce issue and stand ready to assist in their implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide further information or insight from a municipal perspective.

Sincerely,

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