



March 3, 2025

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

The Special Districts Association of Oregon represents approximately 950 districts across the state. Our membership is composed of 32 different types of districts, with nearly 100 that provide drinking water and approximately 50 providing sanitary services to the citizens of our state. The Oregon Association of Water Utilities is a nonprofit, independent association of water and wastewater utilities established in 1977 to represent water utilities' interests in the state legislature and provide onsite technical assistance. Our associations would like to express our support for HB 3634 with a few modifications.

Several communities across the state struggle with attracting and hiring both drinking water and wastewater operators. Many who have enjoyed long and productive careers in this workforce are getting closer to retirement, and we must attract new talent to the industry. Wastewater operators are key to ensuring that our communities can maintain our state's important environment standards and ensure that our citizens can rely on that the water that they drink is safe and meets the highest possible standards.

We would like to support the suggestions made by Mr. Jim Baird from Roseburg Urban Sanitary Authority in his written testimony. We agree that inclusion of Community Colleges that have or develop Water and Environmental Technology Programs (WET) be able to apply for funds to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to support these proven programs. We also agree that funds should be made available to High Schools in Oregon in the form of tuition reimbursements to register high school students in Community College Water and Environmental Technology programs.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we urge the committee include the suggested language.

Sincerely,

Mark Landauer, Special Districts Association of Oregon
Jason Green, Oregon Association of Water Utilities