

To: Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Fragala; Vice-Chair Harbick; Members of the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce

From: Tracy Rainey, Government Relations Manager, Clean Water Services

Date: March 4, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 3634 – Water Workforce Program Investment

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 3634.

Clean Water Services is a local government and public utility that provides sanitary sewer and stormwater services to over 600,000 residents and businesses within urbanized portions of Washington County, including within 12 cities. We own, operate and maintain over 1400 miles of sanitary sewer line, 43 pump stations and 4 water resource recovery facilities that treat wastewater to near drinking water standards.

A recent Bloomberg article, [*“America’s Next Water Crisis? A Lack of Experienced Workers”*](#), published in December of 2024, highlighted the very serious workforce challenges that the water sector faces. The focus of the article was on the often invisible but critical employees who ensure that hundreds of millions of Americans have access to clean drinking water and critical public sewer systems. According to the Bloomberg article, between 30-50 percent of the water sector workforce will retire in the next decade and there aren’t enough younger workers in the pipeline to replace them. A Brookings Institution analysis found that 88% of treatment plant operators were aged 45 or older, compared with 45% of the population nationally.

The water operators that run our drinking water and wastewater treatment plants and the workers that maintain our critical water infrastructure, play a critical role in protecting public health, the environment and in ensuring economic vitality and livability within our communities. HB 3634 provides needed funding to help Oregon better prepare for the next generation of our water workforce.

We will be reaching out to the League of Oregon Cities to suggest potential amendments to improve upon the bill, as introduced. We would like to ensure funding is made available for use within the state’s two existing programs and Clackamas Community College and Umpqua Community College. We would also like to see funding available for utilities to engage in outreach with high schools to increase awareness of career pathways within this important sector.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit testimony and for your consideration of this bill.