

Submitter: Molly McGuire

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3655

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee:

Molly McGuire with the City of Sodaville, writing this morning on behalf of the members of the Small Municipalities Advocacy Coalition (we call it SMAC) in support of HB3655.

Oregon has 241 cities, 87% of which have fewer than 20,000 residents. Factoring out the five most populous cities in the state by the 2022 census, those only with populations over 100,000, it is a well-hidden fact that the average city in Oregon is a small city, with a population of just under 7,400.*

Oregon is decidedly rural, and Oregonians have a clear admiration for living rurally.

SMAC formed as a means for Oregon's smallest municipalities to work directly and together on specific problems that small cities face - ones that may not rise to the top of a larger priority list but are significant to small cities, and to develop specific solutions that we'd like to see.

HB3655 seeks to establish a fairer examination and certification process for Lagoon Wastewater Treatment System operators, lagoon systems being somewhat unique in their methodology and commonly used in smaller, rural, and more isolated communities.

You will hear from testifiers about challenges with certification including low passage rates not isolated to Oregon, about test questions unrelated to lagoon methodology, the answers to which count towards failure, about the high costs to a small city to stay compliant while an operator is being trained, and about the frustrated staff and turnover that results from a clear disconnect between the examination and the on-the-ground reality of the work itself.

Finally, we appreciate the communication with the DEQ over the last few months as we developed our path forward and look forward to working together on solving the challenges we face.

*236 cities, 1,727,577 rem. pop.