



**Testimony to the Joint Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
re: SB 5520**

April 16, 2025

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative, and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

**Re: Oregon Environmental Council strong support for SB 5520, fulling funding
Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality**

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am here in strong support of SB 5520. The Department of Environmental Quality has a unique role to play in Oregon upholding the health and well-being of communities and the critical resources that sustain us.

It is essential that we maintain state level expertise on protecting our air, land and water and that we have resources to safeguard the natural infrastructure which supports the quality of life which Oregonians treasure. While Oregon has made some progress addressing environmental harms, new threats are emerging. For example, hot temperatures increase smog formation, worsening the air we breathe. DEQ is responsible for sending out air advisories more frequently in all regions of the state and also running programs that reduce air pollution. Similarly, water quality must be maintained as demands upon this finite resource increase, infrastructure (like septic systems) age, and new hazards like PFAS in drinking water emerge. DEQ needs resources to collect and analyze data, as well as provide technical assistance to businesses, local governments and communities.

OEC interacts with DEQ across multiple programs and appreciates the professionalism and problem-solving orientation we see staff provide. While there are times we wished processes would move faster or protections were stronger for public health, we know that takes clear direction and resources.

Historically, DEQ has been able to rely upon its federal partners at EPA, USDA, BuRec, NOAA and others to provide co-funding, data-sharing and expertise to support its important air and water quality protection efforts. Given the budget and personnel cuts emerging from the federal administration and the likelihood that those resources are no longer a certainty, DEQ may be called upon to furnish its own monitoring, testing and remediation data. Doing so will not be without costs and the legislature should prepare itself to fund that critical work. It is also likely that DEQ and other state agencies will be called upon to support the state in many ways.

With that uncertainty and the erosion of environmental safeguards at the federal level, it is absolutely critical to hold the line here in Oregon. As Vice-Chair Levy noted in a different committee, Oregon natural resource agencies, of which DEQ is only one, make up less than 2% of our state budget. If anything, we need to be bolstering state agency budgets to prevent any

weakening or loss of protections. We strongly support fully funding DEQ and in particular want to call out the following:

- **POP 120: Maintain fee-funded water quality programs** – authorizes fee increase to maintain current service levels in the Water Quality Division (includes Onsite Septic System Permitting; Wastewater Operator Certifications; Section 401 Water Quality Certifications Dredge/Fill; Underground Injection Control)
- **POP 121: Water Infrastructure Grant and Loan support** -- Authorizes two new positions using existing funds to enhance and expedite customer support, technical assistance, coordination, and process improvements for grant and loan programs disbursing federal and state funds, including the Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- **Approve POP 181/191 Clean Water State Revolving Fund – Loans and Bonds** -- Provides non-limited expenditure approval to fund bond issuance costs to provide the state match component to maintain Oregon's Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- **Fully fund Water Quality Division to implement the Groundwater Quality Management Act (not in GRB)**– provide resources to allow DEQ to lead and provide oversight for interagency collaboration required to address areas that have contamination levels of concern or have been designated as Groundwater Management Areas – and also for core programmatic activities within DEQ's purview and areas of responsibility that are critical for groundwater protection.
- **POP 111** - Updates the fee structure to sustain Oregon's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program, which guides decisions by the Oregon Climate Action Commission, supports critical programs like the Clean Fuels Program and Climate Protection Program, and helps municipalities and the public develop strategies to reduce emissions.
- **POP 170** - Addresses critical resource gaps highlighted in a 2024 Secretary of State audit.
- **Electrification programs, including the Clean Vehicle Rebate/ChargeAhead Program and Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicle and Rebate incentives** to be administered by DEQ.

Sincerely,

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