



April 17, 2025

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means

Subject: Support for \$4 Million in Water Equity Funding (HB 3528)

Co-Chairs Senator Kate Lieber and Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Vice Chair Senator Fred Girod, Representatives David Gomberg and Greg Smith, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hamdi Abdullahi and I serve as the Co-Executive Director at Somali Empowerment Circle, a culturally specific grassroots organization that supports Somali immigrant and refugee families across the tri-county area. We also support communities with similar values and upbringing, such as the Latine, Muslim and African communities. Our work focuses on housing stability, maternal and child health, and environmental justice—centered in the lived experiences of historically excluded communities. I am writing to express our strong support for HB 3528 and the proposed \$4 million investment in advancing water equity throughout Oregon.

The communities we serve face structural barriers to basic needs—including access to clean, safe, and affordable water. Many live in aging, substandard housing with unreliable plumbing infrastructure and face disproportionately high utility bills. In some cases, families have endured water shutoffs without adequate warning or resources to recover. These conditions not only harm physical and mental health but also stress and economic insecurity.

HB 3528 would help bridge the gap by resourcing the very communities most impacted by water injustice—like the immigrant, refugee, and low-income families we work with every day. We strongly support the \$800,000 allocated to Portland State University's Institute for Tribal Governments to uplift tribal-led water solutions and the \$3.2 million for the University of Oregon to support research and grantmaking efforts in frontline communities.

Water equity is essential to the long-term well-being of our communities. This bill reflects a critical step toward justice and resiliency by honoring community knowledge, funding local solutions, and protecting basic rights. We urge you to pass HB 3528 and invest in water justice for all, especially those who have been systemically left behind.

Thank you for your time and commitment to a more equitable Oregon.

Sincerely,

Hamdi Abdullahi, Co-Executive Director
Somali Empowerment Circle