

Submitter: Arthur Donnelly
On Behalf Of: Mapleton Water District
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5531

My name is Arthur Donnelly. I am the Vice-Chair of the Mapleton Water District Board of Commissioners. I am submitting this testimony in support of our Capital Funding Request for the project entitled: Mapleton Water District Priority Distribution Line Replacement. As documented in the 2024 Water System Master Plan, produced by Civil West Engineering; the distribution system in the Chestnut/MSD Campus and Riverview Priority Zones is largely comprised of over 70-year old asbestos/concrete pipe. These lines are well past their estimated service life. Ruptures in this brittle and compromised infrastructure cost the Mapleton Water District over \$100,000.00 in contracted repairs and months of water outages or boil notices in 2024 alone. Given the size of our economically distressed, unincorporated community this is an completely unsustainable situation, which will only continue to get worse until these lines can be replaced. The Priority Zones included in our proposed project contain the majority of our service area's residential population, all of our commercial customers and all of the community's critical services; such as the Mapleton School campus, Fire Department, Library, Food Bank, Church, Post Office and Gas Station. These upgrades are urgently needed and well past due and are necessary, not only to provide safer and more reliable potable water, but also to ensure adequate fire protection, which areas such as the School Campus woefully lack.

This request is not being made in order to get "out ahead" of a problem. This request for funding is being made to prevent a well-documented water crisis from worsening. It is unfortunate that over the past five or more years; Mapleton has become synonymous with water system dysfunction. But the enormity of the cost of updating this failing system, currently estimated at approximately \$25M, is beyond the ability of a small former mill town, left behind by a de-industrialized economy, to finance on its own. Our community, whose MHI is less than half that of the State's average, pays over double the State of Oregon's recommended Affordability Index for their water bill each month. Debt financing of critical infrastructure will realistically put running water out of reach for much of our community and force the closure of our remaining local businesses.

Mapleton and the Mapleton Water District are not looking for a handout. We are asking for the Legislature's investment in our community's potential to grow, to build more housing, to attract more economic development and to give our children a reason to build lives here.

The Mapleton Water District is a community owned and community led public utility. With the help of SDAO, OHA and the Rural Community Assistance Corporation our Special District went through a complete reorganization in 2023. Our team of volunteer Board members and paid staff have proven their effectiveness at managing

large scale investment of funding and meeting the complex challenges of large infrastructure projects, by recently completing the \$3.5M upgrade and expansion of our Water Treatment Plant. We have worked tirelessly to bring in the funding to complete more of our system upgrades. We secured approval of over \$4.5M in additional Federal funding and had submitted applications for an additional \$6M. However, like many rural communities in Oregon, we have seen both the funding commitments we were counting on and the sources of further funding disappear overnight.

I understand that \$6,825,710.00 is a large request, but it is not a request for you to throw a life line to our community, but instead a request for you to help us sustain the life blood of our community. No water...No life.