

Submitter: Devon Lawson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4005

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Devon Lawson. I am testifying in support of HB 4005 A.

This bill does more than just circle a date on the calendar. It is a strategic intervention to address crises of visibility and workforce development in our most critical infrastructure.

We are facing a massive wave of retirements in the water sector. In many of your rural districts, the person who knows how to run the treatment plant is the same person who has been doing it for 30 years, and they are about to retire. If we do not have a pipeline of young workers ready to replace them, our rural water systems are at risk of failure. HB 4005 A explicitly encourages "educational outreach" to recruit the next generation. It tells a high school student in Enterprise or Stayton, "This is not just a job; this is a profession that saves your community." It is a zero-cost recruitment tool for rural Oregon.

We often talk about "water" as an abstract resource, using terms like acre-feet, flow rates, and temperature. But water does not clean itself, and pipes do not fix themselves. Safe water is the product of human labor. In a time of climate crisis, when we are asking these systems to handle extreme weather, we must elevate the status of the workers who maintain them. We cannot build climate resilience if we treat the workforce as invisible. This bill helps the public understand that their tap water is connected to a human being working a night shift.

This bill has no fiscal impact. It uses the state's "soft power" to change culture. It encourages public agencies to open their doors and show the public the value of what they own.

By passing HB 4005 A, we are sending a message that Oregon values the hands that build our resilience. We are helping to recruit the workforce of tomorrow by honoring the workforce of today.

I urge a "Yes" vote.

Thank you.