

Submitter: Molly Collins

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure: HB4128

First time I stepped inside the Oregon State Capitol was on Tuesday after a failed meeting at the Oregon Water Resource Department. When I originally signed up to testify I had no idea what this bill was exactly about but I was hoping it would be about water rights, ground water and well management. I was fairly confident that "water infrastructure" would include wells, pumping stations, reservoirs, recharge canals and wetlands maybe even dams or beaver studies. Well imagine my surprise when it was introduced? Housing, water and sewage systems! 90 million for 50 shovel ready projects in water and sewage systems to support 11,000 homes. We do need more housing and rural/underserved communities need help with aging infrastructure. The mayor from Sandy and the lady from Golden Hill were very compelling. And I was pleased to hear 3 million for OWRD water well abandonment fund, repair and replace fund. But I was hoping to hear more about funding to support the OWRD backlogged applications and more support for the ongoing 2021 overhaul of the OWRD. Not to say that these 50 projects or 150 projects for 3 years are not important. They are and this effort should be supported. I am just very dubious that the OWRD can support reviewing these projects on its own budget. It still has new guidelines to implement this year and has to establish what a "stable" groundwater level is or means. And as far as well maintenance, the OWRD website states it closed applications for help with wells in Oct. 2023 after it flew through 5.4 million. It clearly has a backlog of individuals needing help. And if this really is 3 years at 90 million for 11,000 homes (urbanization affects groundwater recharge) then this committee has a duty to ensure OWRD can support any new development oversight. And maybe there are plans for all this in a different bill? Thank you for time and dedication to Oregon. I am happy to report to my kids that I have taken part in the legislative process.