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February 18, 2025

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

RE: Support HB 3525 - Requiring Landlords to Test Tenant Wells

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Rose Poton and I am the Water Justice Coordinator at Verde. Verde is a community-based organization whose mission is to build environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise. We write today to express our strong support for [HB3525](#), which promotes transparency in well water testing, ensures habitable and safe housing, protects public health, and upholds tenants' rights.

Verde has engaged with community members across Oregon through our partnership with the Oregon Water Futures Collaborative. Through community events and interviews, we have heard from over 200 Oregonians about their water priorities. Again and again, renters' rights—particularly the need for transparency in well water quality reporting—emerged as a top concern. Many renters and those in employer-provided housing are not guaranteed access to water quality reports. Without this information, tenants have no way of knowing if their water contains contaminants, putting their health at risk. Community members shared that they often had to rely on word of mouth or personal concerns to prompt well testing, but in many cases, they never received test results.

That uncertainty of not having access to your water quality information takes a toll. It creates anxiety about potential long-term health risks. It forces people to either spend money on expensive bottled water or filters—if they even know those risks exist—or to simply hope for the best. And that's not a choice anyone should have to make, especially renters who have no control over well maintenance or testing. Access to water quality test results empowers renters to make informed decisions about their water use and take precautions to safeguard their health.

Rental property owners are not required to test well water or disclose water quality to tenants. This places the full responsibility on well owners to maintain their wells and ensure water safety. Tenants renting homes with private wells depend entirely on their landlords to provide safe drinking water. [HB3525](#) addresses this gap by establishing a structured testing schedule for rental properties with domestic wells, requiring landlords to test for arsenic, E. coli, lead, and nitrates and disclose the results to tenants.

Ensure Housing is Habitable by Ensuring Access to Safe Drinking Water

[Oregon Residential Landlord Tenant Act \(ORS 90.320\)](#) requires landlords to maintain habitable rental properties, including access to safe drinking water. We already require public water systems to meet safety standards—why should renters relying on private wells be any less



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protected? [HB3525](#) will strengthen these protections by making well water testing a legal requirement, ensuring tenants are not unknowingly exposed to contaminated water.

Safeguarding Oregon's Groundwater

Groundwater is essential to Oregon's water security: nearly 90% of public water systems rely on it, and over 20% of households depend on private wells for drinking water. There are about 350,000 wells statewide, ensuring groundwater quality is critical for both public health and environmental sustainability. [HB3525](#) plays a key role in safeguarding this vital water source by requiring well water testing and transparency in rental properties.

- **Early Contamination Detection:** Regular well water testing will help identify pollutants such as arsenic, E. coli, lead, and nitrates before they spread, allowing for timely intervention to prevent further contamination of groundwater supplies.
- **Increased Public Awareness of Groundwater Health:** By ensuring that test results are shared with tenants, [HB3525](#) increases public awareness of groundwater health, leading to more community-driven advocacy and action on water protection.
- **Promoting Responsible Well Maintenance:** When landlords are required to test well water, they are also encouraged to properly maintain their wells, reducing the risk of contamination from poor infrastructure or neglect.
- **Reducing Public Health Risks:** Contaminated wells can contribute to wider groundwater pollution, affecting entire communities. By implementing a structured testing system, [HB3525](#) helps prevent larger-scale water quality crises.

Advance State and Local Priorities for Ensuring the Safety of Oregon's Drinking Water for Current and Future Generations

[HB3525](#) helps advance priorities found in Oregon's [Integrated Water Resource Strategy](#) which includes "ensuring the safety of Oregon's drinking water" and to "develop additional groundwater protections." [HB3525](#) would require landlords to test well water that can help with identifying potential groundwater contamination and strengthen state groundwater protections.

[Water Justice Policy Action Framework \(WJPAF\)](#) by [Oregon Water Futures Collaborative](#) outlines opportunities for local and state actions that HB3525 addresses including upholding renter's rights by ensuring they are provided water quality test results.

With declining groundwater levels, climate-driven droughts, and increasing contamination risks, it is more urgent than ever to ensure that all Oregonians—including renters—have access to safe, clean water. We urge you to support [HB3525](#) and help establish basic protections for tenants relying on private wells.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roselyn Poton, Water Justice Coordinator, Verde