



November 8, 2022

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
3225 25th Street SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

Re: Emergency Board Request by Klamath Community College

Chair Cross, Vice-Chair Rowe, and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for your work ensuring pathways to postsecondary education success for Oregonians statewide. As Chair and Vice-Chair of the House Agriculture, Land Use, and Water Committee, and elected representatives of the people of the Klamath Basin, we urge you to support Klamath Community College in requesting funding from the Oregon Legislature's Emergency Board to purchase well drilling equipment and establish a non-credit well drilling certification program.

Many residents in Klamath County supply their own drinking water through wells. Klamath County has been especially hard hit by the 22-year megadrought across the Western United States. Drought and other water management challenges in the basin have left approximately 450 residents without a reliable supply of drinking water due to declining groundwater levels and lack of recharge. The legislature has approved \$9 million to the Klamath Basin over the past year to help residents with the cost of well deepening and new well construction. However, there is a severe lack of availability of accredited well drillers across the state, with wait times that can exceed a year.

Recognizing the significant need for well-drillers, Klamath Community College worked with local partners to develop a well-drilling certification course. That course is in the process of recruiting students, but investment is needed to scale up the effort. Funding for well-drilling equipment would allow the community college to train multiple students at one time and give them the hands-on experience they need to become well drillers.

We applaud Klamath Community College for their proactive and innovative approach to a pressing challenge facing their community, and we believe that an investment in necessary equipment will also benefit the state as a whole. We are encouraged to see community colleges identifying and filling important gaps in our water workforce. Please do not delay in moving forward this funding request for consideration in December by the Emergency Board.


Sincerely,

Representative Ken Helm, HD 34, Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
Representative Mark Owens, HD 60, Vice-Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water
Representative Vikki Breese Iverson, HD 55, House Republican Leader
Representative E. Werner Reschke, HD 56

[Signatures on the next page]



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