



“Making Every Resource Count”

Oregon Wheat Growers League 115 SE 8th Street, Pendleton, OR 97801 (541) 276-7330 www.owgl.org

TO: Rep. Ken Helm, Chair
Members of House Energy & Environment Committee

FR: Blake Rowe
CEO, Oregon Wheat Growers League

RE: OWGL Urge Your NO Vote on HB 2705, HB 2706, HB 2707

The Oregon Wheat Growers League (OWGL) is proud to represent nearly 2,000 farms across Oregon that produce wheat, one of our state’s largest and most valuable crops. Wheat contributes hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect economic value to Oregon’s economy, especially Oregon’s rural economy. As an industry at the heart of rural Oregon, we are deeply concerned that HB 2705, HB 2706, and HB 2707 would disproportionately burden family farmers and impede economic development in rural communities. For this reason, **OWGL opposes HB 2705, HB 2706, and HB 2707.**

HB 2705 would impose sweeping data collection and reporting requirements on farmers, even though it does not specify the purposes for which any of this data would be used. Collecting this unnecessary data would cost a farmer an additional \$1,000 to \$20,000 in reporting and compliance costs, including installation of technologically advanced measurement devices on Oregon’s wells. In short, HB 2705 would provide state agencies with endless data with no clear purpose and would saddle rural communities with the costs.

Adding to the economic hardships farmers throughout the state already face, **HB 2706** would create an onerous new tax on water rights. Not only would implementation of the tax pose significant new cost on farmers, but it would also force farmers to pay for water rights that are already reflected in property values. In other words, farmers would pay taxes twice on the same water rights—water rights that are essential to farmers’ livelihoods and necessary to provide a sustainable food supply to Oregon and the world. Ultimately, the new fee would compel farmers and other rural water users to shoulder disproportionate costs of water resources management that benefits the entire state and every sector of our economy. Oregonians from all communities—not just rural Oregonians—should share the costs of protecting water resources that are vital to us all.

Finally, **HB 2707** would appropriate scarce budget resources that our state needs solely for core services for the purpose of conducting groundwater studies. While OWGL appreciates the need for data collection to support effective water resources management, HB 2707 is the wrong approach. Oregon taxpayers shouldn’t foot the bill for the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to conduct studies with no clear expectations or guidance as to the methodologies and goals of the studies.

For these reasons, **OWGL opposes HB 2705, 2706, and 2707** as drafted. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on these important issues, and we welcome the opportunity to work together to protect Oregon’s water resources in the most effective way possible.