



April 5, 2017

Representative Jeff Reardon  
Chair, Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
900 Court St. NE, H-473  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Subject: HB 3337 – Landscape contractor qualifications**

Dear Representative Reardon,

The Regional Water Providers Consortium (Consortium) is opposed to and urges you to oppose HB 3337 which would eliminate the minimum experience and examination requirements for individuals to become licensed landscape construction professionals in the State of Oregon.

By the nature of their work, landscape construction professionals are critical partners in the effective management of Oregon's drinking water resources – particularly during peak summer usage – when water is used to irrigate landscapes, and it is imperative that they have the knowledge and experience to do so safely and efficiently.

This bill would eliminate the fundamental experience and examination requirements for landscape construction professionals to design, build, and maintain irrigation systems. This will diminish public protection from unqualified work, and represents a step backwards in the ongoing work to effectively manage Oregon's drinking water resources for all citizens.

The Consortium works to improve the planning and management of municipal water supplies in the greater Portland, OR metropolitan region. Formed in 1997, the Consortium serves Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties, and is made up of 20 water providers and the regional government Metro. Together, these entities provide more than 80 percent of the Portland metropolitan area's drinking water, and more than 40 percent of Oregon's drinking water. The Consortium implements a regional water conservation program, and for more than 10 years has directly supported landscape construction professionals with obtaining the necessary continuing education hours requirement by providing free classes that focus on principles of efficient landscape water use, best management practices, emerging irrigation control technologies, and overcoming language barriers in the industry.

In the 2015 legislative session, the recommendations of a work group convened by Senator Chuck Thomsen to address issues with the Oregon Landscape Contractors Board (LCB) and its regulations were unanimously adopted by both chambers in the form of SB 580. The work group included diverse stakeholder representatives from the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association (OLCA), the Oregon Landscape Alliance (OLA), the Landscape Contractors Board (LCB), the Construction Contractors Board, water providers, and the Oregon League of Cities. While many substantive compromises and streamlining recommendations were addressed in SB 580, including significantly reducing the continuing education requirements for renewing licensees, elimination of the examination or other qualification requirements was never accepted as a valid option. Also in 2015, the Legislature approved legislation mandating the development and implementation of a practical skill examination as an alternative to the written examination. OLCA, the LCB, and other volunteer stakeholders expended a great deal of time and effort to implement that legislation which provides yet another alternative path for licensure provided by the LCB in addition to the Probationary License option that is currently available to applicants who do not meet the current experience requirements.

Environmental regulations, water policies, irrigation technology, and landscape practices continue to evolve rapidly. The citizens and communities of the Portland metropolitan area are better served by an experienced and knowledgeable base of licensed landscape construction professionals. Please contact Rebecca Geisen at 503-823-7493 if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Tom Lewis, Chair  
Regional Water Providers Consortium Board

cc: Multnomah County House Legislative Delegation  
Clackamas County House Legislative Delegation  
Washington County House Legislative Delegation  
Regional Water Providers Consortium Technical Committee  
Regional Water Providers Consortium Board