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Chairman Peter DeFazio  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio,

On behalf of Orenco Systems, I write to thank you and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for considering and approving H.R. 1915—the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2021. This legislation will make great strides to address America's water infrastructure needs and to help working-class families install, repair and replace malfunctioning decentralized wastewater treatment systems their households rely on. This legislation is an important first step in providing much-needed assistance to communities and homeowners in Oregon's 4<sup>th</sup> District and across the country, especially in wake of the devastation caused by the wildfires.

By way of background, Orenco Systems was founded in 1981 in response to widespread failures in Oregon's onsite wastewater systems. Since then, we've grown to become an industry leader, with over 350 employees and 300 points of distribution worldwide. Our products can be found in 70 countries, on virtually every continent.

What started as a response to failing onsite systems quickly led to the realization that there are many small communities with failing wastewater infrastructure that have been overlooked by the SRF program for years. In fact, the community of Powers, Oregon, is in dire need of a community wastewater solution. Due to issues during the SRF process the community felt impotent during the decision-making process and decided that the financials would be too burdensome for the community to support. Thus, a small Oregon community is suffering the consequences of a broken program that focuses on large municipalities while 30% of the Oregon taxpayers are left footing the bill. As long-time supporters of your platform, and a vital employer to your constituency we wholeheartedly support this legislation and ask for your full support as well.

In Oregon, 30% of the state's population relies on decentralized systems to treat their wastewater. Much of the time, the burden falls on these homeowners to maintain and install these systems, which can cost anywhere from a few thousand dollars to \$25,000 depending on the system and geography. A failing onsite system can result in sewage overflow, causing serious public health and water quality concerns. Unfortunately, the primary mechanism for federal wastewater assistance—the Clean Water State Revolving Fund—is ill-suited to assist these families. Furthermore, over the course of

its existence, less than 1% of CWSRF has gone to decentralized systems, despite these systems treating wastewater for 25% of the nation's population.

Language in H.R. 1915 is an important first step in addressing these challenges. The bill creates a new grant program under the Clean Water Act to provide funding to low- and moderate-income households through a qualified nonprofit or municipality. The bill is flexible in allowing solutions that best fit the needs of the household, geography, and community by allowing grants to be used for the construction, repair, or replacement of a decentralized wastewater system or the installation of a larger decentralized wastewater system that can provide treatment to two or more households. Further, households without access to functioning wastewater systems are prioritized for receiving funding under this bill. Orenco would like to express our strong support for H.R. 1915. We thank you for your leadership on this issue, as it directly impacts Oregon small businesses, the environment and will help communities recover more quickly from wildfires. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to enact this legislation.

Thank you for your leadership, and Orenco stands ready to support your efforts on this issue.

Sincerely,

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