



17 December, 2025

RE: Comments in support of SB 628

Chair Jacque and members of the Senate Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs Committee,

Thank you for holding a hearing on SB 628 regarding notifying counties and tribes of groundwater protection standards and PFAS exceedances. River Alliance of Wisconsin is here to testify in support of the bill. River Alliance is a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that empowers people to protect and restore Wisconsin's water. Much of our work focuses on helping people at a local level identify and respond to water quality and quantity problems that affect them, their communities, and aquatic ecosystems. Our supporters include more than 5,000 individuals and businesses, and nearly a hundred local watershed organizations struggling with exactly the kinds of contamination issues this bill is intended to address.

Everyone in Wisconsin has a right to clean water. We are extraordinarily blessed to have the water resources we do, but our water is not invulnerable. In 2021 and 2022, ten counties in Wisconsin voted YES to a Clean Water Now Advisory referendum that read: *"Should the State of Wisconsin establish a right to clean water to protect human health, the environment, and the diverse cultural and natural heritage of Wisconsin?"* Support for this right was overwhelming in these counties despite their wide range of geographic and demographic differences. **(Voters in Marquette (73%), Portage (77%) and Wood Counties (76%) approved referendums in the spring of 2021. Voters in Eau Claire (79%) and La Crosse Counties (86%) approved referendums in the spring of 2022. And in the fall of 2022, voters in Adams (79.7%), Bayfield (80%), Green (84%), Juneau (79.6%), and Outagamie (79.5%) Counties approved referendums.)** This demonstrates that a right to clean water is a unifying and apolitical concern across populations, as it should be.

As you are well aware, groundwater quality in Wisconsin is negatively impacted by a wide range of natural and human-caused forms of contamination. More than 800,000 Wisconsinites rely on private wells for their drinking water. Those of us who live in cities take it for granted that utilities must inform us of hazards in our drinking water. But if you're a rural resident, or relying on a private well, you're largely on your own to figure this out. This is not a straightforward task either.

Groundwater is complex, contamination is not always obvious even in some cases where it's highly dangerous. The risks from chronic exposure to toxic drinking water have life changing and lifelong consequences from cancer to birth defects to cognitive consequences for child development.

SB 628 takes a concrete step toward better protection for rural Wisconsin residents. We support the bill and would also be supportive of adding an appropriation to the bill or funding in the next state budget to support the notification system. If people have a right to clean water, they also have a right to know when the water is not clean. This bill is exactly the sort of action on which we appreciate having our legislators take a strong position. Giving families knowledge of the threats to their drinking water makes it possible for them to protect themselves. You cannot do this if you don't know there's a problem. Giving our community and farmer-led watershed groups this knowledge will provide them with a shared focus for addressing their community's biggest water-related challenges.

Thank you for your time and attention,



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