

**Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici – January 18, 2024**

**Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries**

*Legislative Hearing: Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act*

Thank you, Chairman Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman, for holding this legislative hearing, and for inviting me to testify in support of H.R. 6235, the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act.

This legislation would prepare and protect communities and ecosystems from the devastating effects of harmful algal blooms – known as HABs – and hypoxia events. Heat, decaying vegetation, and human activity in water systems are causing HABs to occur with increasing frequency. HABs produce cyanobacteria, which can accumulate in high doses in aquatic wildlife and, if consumed, can cause short-term memory loss, seizures, coma, and death. Hypoxia, low levels of oxygen, is caused by increased water temperature and excess nutrients, and can cause die-off of fish, shellfish, coral, and aquatic plants. My bill would improve monitoring, research, and community and federal response to HAB and hypoxia events to prevent and control disasters in our water systems.

According to the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, a single major HAB event can cost up to \$100 million in seafood supply disruption, environmental damage, and health effects. Dead zones

caused by hypoxia can destabilize fish and shellfish stocks and kill off entire populations of aquatic species.

Astoria, a coastal city in the district I represent, is home to one of two labs that test for HABs in Oregon. This bill would streamline assessments to better understand the causes of HABs and hypoxia and their economic and socio-cultural effects. Additionally, the bill would create the National HAB Observing Network to leverage ongoing monitoring and forecasting projects. It would also authorize the HAB Control Technologies Incubator program at NOAA to encourage development and deployment of cutting-edge monitoring technologies. These projects will equip researchers and communities with the tools they need to mitigate the risks that contribute to these events and respond effectively.

Harmful algal blooms can occur in any water system, not just those in coastal communities. Last summer, a month-long HABs event in the Ross Island Lagoon on the Willamette River triggered health advisories in the Portland area. It happens in the Great Lakes and other bodies of water as well.

My bill would also improve research, forecasting, and response duties for freshwater and estuarine HABs at the Environmental Protection

Agency, and equip NOAA to act as the lead agency for HABs activities. It would provide resources to communities affected by HAB or hypoxia events of significance for recovery and restoration efforts.

Harmful algal blooms and hypoxia events threaten the health of our marine and freshwater ecosystems and our communities. My bill will improve research and coordination at NOAA and EPA, and help communities better protect against and respond quickly to these disasters.

I'm grateful that many provisions of my bill were included as a bipartisan amendment, filed with Representative Posey, to the Weather Act Reauthorization Act, which was reported favorably out of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee last November. I am also appreciative of the support of our Senate partners, Senators Tammy Baldwin and Dan Sullivan.

Thank you, again, for considering this critical legislation and inviting me to testify about its importance. I yield back the remainder of my time.