

March 8, 2017

House Human Services Committee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 5026: Relating to the financial administration of the Oregon Health Authority

Co-Chairs Rayfield and Steiner Hayward, members of the committee, good morning. My name is Tricia Tillman and I am the Director of Public Health for Multnomah County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 5026.

We are the state's largest public health department and safety-net health care provider. Like 33 other local public health authorities in our state, Multnomah County Health Department is statutorily responsible for promoting and protecting health and preventing disease for our county's diverse communities.

Our county's Health Department works to achieve wellness by preventing the spread of disease, protecting people from environmental threats, promoting healthy behaviors, promoting health equity, and breaking down barriers to health. We work to achieve optimal health for all who live, work, and play in Multnomah County.

Stable funding for public health and prevention services serves all our communities. Investing in public health keeps more people healthy for less cost. According to the Trust for America's Health, every \$1 invested in prevention saves \$5.60 in health spending. In an era of constrained resources, that is a substantial and necessary return on investment both financially and in terms of avoiding unnecessary illness and suffering.

In December, the Health Department celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Roosevelt High School School-Based Health Center. When it was opened in 1986, it was the first such Health Center west of St. Paul, Minnesota and it was a visionary leap for local public health. Today, Multnomah County has 13 School-Based Health Centers across Portland Public Schools, David Douglas, Parkrose, and Centennial school districts.

In FY15, Multnomah County SBHCs provided 17,456 visits to more than 6,500 students. Over half of the students identified as Hispanic, Black, or Asian. More than 60% were aged 16 or younger.

School-based health centers are a powerful investment in the health and academic potential of children and adolescents. They provide access to primary care and prevention services, including well child/adolescent exams, illness and injury treatment, immunizations, reproductive health, prescriptions, healthy eating, active living, and tobacco prevention counseling. They also provide vital mental health services. School-Based Health Centers focus on prevention and early intervention and serve all children ages 5 to 18 in the county, whether their families have private health insurance, public health

insurance, or no insurance at all. This integrated approach enables children and adolescents to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

School-Based Health Centers are only one example of how public health improves the health of everyone in Multnomah County. Other major investments include core public health functions like Communicable Disease Control, Environmental Health, and Prevention & Health Promotion that help create a solid foundation for lifelong health.

Our programs intervene early and help establish healthy patterns. We disrupt physical and social hazards throughout people's lives that can lead to chronic disease and poor health. Between the increase in some health threats and the simultaneous decrease in funding, we have had to limit our efforts to prevent and treat disease.

Reducing funding for these services will reduce access and end crucial health services for a vulnerable population. Protecting and, ideally, increasing your investment in public health is essential for preventing costly diseases, preserving the fabric of public health, and promoting the health of all people who call Oregon home.