

I write to you on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties regarding HB 2891, which requires local public health authorities, along with other health care entities, to maintain supplies for a mortality rate of 25% of the population, for 120 days, in the case of an emergency.

We appreciate the intent of this bill, which we believe is to ensure preparedness for a future natural disaster, pandemic, or other catastrophic event, and one which results in a mass casualty. Counties are at the forefront of many of the primary services required in the event of a large-scale emergency, including public health, behavioral health, and emergency management. In response to COVID-19, local public health authorities have worked closely with state agencies and other community partners to provide access to testing, case investigation, contact tracing, wrap-around services, and now vaccination distribution.

For a state with a population of 4.2 million people, COVID-19 deaths have made up approximately 1,991 of our State's population over the course of the last year to date, and every one of those deaths is tragic. For perspective, Oregon's current COVID deaths make up less than 1% of our state's population. According to the bill, local public health authorities would be required to store supplies for a death rate of 25% for 120 days, which would require supplies and storage for approximately 1 million people statewide. In Marion County, neither the largest nor the smallest County in Oregon, with a population of approximately 347,000, the County would be required to hold capacity and mortuary refrigeration for over 86,000 bodies. Marion County's current private "normal" mortuary capacity is for 118, while private mortuary maximum stacking capacity is for 254.

In addition, the bill does not clearly lay out the funding mechanism required for supplying these additional supplies and storage capacity. At this point, Counties would not be able to appropriately resource the requirements laid out in the bill, and Local Public Health Authorities would need financial support to meet these increased expectations for a major disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to share AOC's perspective on this bill, and we would appreciate the opportunity to work through these outstanding questions with the committee and the bill sponsors, in hopes of improving statewide emergency preparedness.

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Association of Oregon Counties