



WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

To: Co-Chairs Senator Betsy Johnson, Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Representative Dan Rayfield, and Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly Joint Committee on Ways and Means

April 14, 2021

Good evening Co-Chairs and committee members, my name is Dr. Jennifer McElravey. I chair the Washington County Public Health Advisory Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Public Health Modernization.

A modern public health system ensures critical public health protections are in place for every person in Oregon, that the public health system is prepared and has the right resources to address emerging health threats, and that the public health system is engaged daily to eliminate health disparities.

The legislature adopted Public Health Modernization in 2015 with a target funding goal of over \$200 million by 2023. So far, the Oregon Legislature has invested \$15 million in public health modernization, far short of the \$210 million gap in the model that was identified by the legislature in 2016. The Oregon Health Authority requested \$69 million for this biennium and I am here to support that ask.

I realize this seems like a big number, but when you divide it across two years, 33 local public health authorities, tribes, the Oregon Health Authority, and community-based organizations, the dollars go quickly – and we have a lot of work to do. \$69 million is a wise investment to make progress on accountability metrics in communicable disease and environmental health program areas.

For the Washington County Health and Human Services Department, our share of the \$30 million statewide investment in the Governor's Recommended Budget would equal about 4 FTE, while our share of the \$68 million would equal about 12 FTE. And with the larger FTE, we could hire nurses, epidemiologists, and support staff to promote community improvements including studying health disparities and underlying causes of disease.

During COVID, Washington County HHS has used public health modernization dollars to convene BIPOC partners, increase our capacity to respond to and prevent communicable diseases including COVID, and collaborate with and fund the Oregon Health Equity Alliance on community engagement and equity efforts.

Thank you for considering supporting the continuation and expansion of this important work with a \$69 million statewide investment this biennium.

Jennifer McElravey, PharmD

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Chair, Washington County Public Health Advisory Council

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