

Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board

Membership

Becca Brownlee, Chair
Hanna Atenafu, Vice-Chair
Cheryl Carter
Bernal Cruz
Timur Ender
Bertha Ferran
Suzanne Hansche
Laurel Ann Hansen
Mahad Hassan
Rebecca Lavelle-Register
Maher Lazeg
Alyshia Macaysa
Debbie McKissack
Daniel Morris
Ryan Petteway
Maribel Reyes
Joannie Tang
Yamungu Seraya

April 21, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support a \$69 million investment in Oregon's public health system.

Co-Chairs Steiner Hayward, Johnson, and Rayfield, and members of the Committee, my name is Daniel Morris. I am a doctor of public health, an epidemiologist, and a member of the Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board (MCPHAB). I'm testifying today on behalf of MCPHAB to encourage you to make the \$69 million investment in Oregon's public health system that the Oregon Health Authority requested.

Oregon needs and deserves a modern public health system. Investments in public health pay for themselves many times over, prevent disease and premature death, and reduce disparities. Our public health system has suffered from years of cuts and underfunding, and has been severely strained working to protect people from the spread of COVID. Investing in our public health system not only means we'll be better prepared for the next outbreak or natural disaster, but that we'll support the workforce that has been working so hard to keep Oregon healthy.

Public health is about equity. The science of epidemiology works by measuring disparities -- figuring out who is getting sick and who is not -- and identifying the changeable factors behind those disparities that can be fixed to make everyone healthier. Because we haven't been investing enough in our public health system, we've allowed health disparities to persist and grow. This \$69 million investment is a chance to turn that around.

This past year we've seen an infusion of one-time federal funds to support the state's response to COVID, but the rest of our system for dealing with communicable diseases falls short. For example, we're seeing big increases in sexually transmitted infections in Oregon. Public health agencies know how to get those rates down, through data collection and analysis, contact tracing, and getting people the information and treatment they need to avoid spreading infections even more. These diseases can be prevented with a greater investment in the public health system, or they can be allowed to spread more with inadequate funding. MCPHAB urges you to choose Oregon's health.

Thank you for your support and I am happy to answer any questions.

Daniel Morris, MS, PhD

Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board Member

Contact

Nathan Wickstrom
Multnomah County
Health Department
619 NW 6th Ave
Portland, OR 97209

(503) 307-9725