



Oregon Public Health Association

818 SW 3rd Ave. #1201
Portland OR 97204
www.OregonPublicHealth.org

February 8, 2021

Chairs Lieber and Nosse and Committee Members
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

Dear Chairs Lieber and Nosse and Committee Members:

On behalf of the more than 560 OPHA members, I would like to express our strong support for the full \$68.9 million investment in public health modernization initially submitted by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

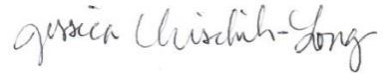
Public health modernization is essential to protecting and improving the health of all people in Oregon. This level of investment is needed to reverse the years of disinvestment in our public health system and to take meaningful action to address health disparities caused by decades of systemic racism. Last week's [presentation](#) from OHA Director Patrick Allen and Public Health Division Director Rachael Banks demonstrated the enormous breadth of health issues our public health system manages daily. Investing in public health modernization will allow our public health professionals to continue centering equity, provide evidence-based programs that improve health, and more nimbly pivot to emergencies, like COVID-19, when they arise. Make no mistake, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all people in Oregon and around the world and it has done so unequally, infecting and killing significantly more Black, Indigenous and people of color than other groups. However, it will not be the last public health crisis that our state will face. Investing in our public health system through this modernization funding will enable that system to be better prepared for these crises when they come.

This biennium, the legislature has the opportunity for the first time to support the funding that our public health system needs to work with our communities on climate change. Climate change is not a distant threat. It has already affected lives in Oregon and will continue to affect us all. We need to invest now, strengthening our communities' resilience, both physically and mentally for the projected disasters and stressors yet to come. Climate change is a global phenomenon, but its effects are felt locally.

Investments in public health at the state and local level will allow for community engagement and planning that's culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate for all members of a community. Climate driven health risks like wildfire smoke, drinking water compromised by toxic algae blooms, and prolonged heat are all known problems. Youth anxiety about climate change is an emerging public health problem and all of these require resources to address.

OPHA urges full investment. Any reduction will severely hamper public health's ability to promptly and successfully meet whatever challenges lie ahead will leave our most vulnerable behind yet again.

On behalf of our membership,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Nischik-Long".

Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH
Executive Director
Oregon Public Health Association