



LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Joe Berney
Jay Bozievich
Heather Buch
Pat Farr
Pete Sorenson

DATE: February 9, 2021
TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
RE: RE: HB 5024, Appropriating General Fund to the Oregon Health Authority

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Leiber and Representative Nosse and Members of the Subcommittee:

Lane County wishes to express its support for the Oregon Legislature providing \$69M to the Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division, for public health modernization. We ask that the Subcommittee work to ensure that this level of appropriation is placed into HB 5024 as one of its recommendations to the full Ways and Means Committee.

Public Health Modernization continues to exist as one of Lane County's top budget priorities and has existed in that space since we worked to ensure the passage of HB 3100 in 2015. It turns out that indeed hindsight is 20-20. Had we been able to predict the future, we might have easily suggested the Legislature would be well served in 2020 to prepare adequately for a global pandemic. For it is through the pandemic that the importance of foundational programs and capabilities within the realm of public health have become so fundamentally required. By developing these elements, Lane County has weathered the pandemic in fairly good shape.

Indeed, the Oregon Health Authority, along with its 34 Local Public Health Programs, has been able to keep Oregon safer than many other places in the United States. It is accurate to suggest that Oregon has never made a \$69M investment in Public Health Modernization. But the pandemic showcases the wisdom of such an investment. For without the coordination and collaboration between our state and local public health systems, the pandemic's cost to this state would make a \$69M investment pale in comparison.

In examining our testimony on this subject from 2019, we made the point that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". We urge you to fund this ounce of prevention. Our promise back to you is that local public health will continue to aggressively pursue communicable disease prevention and vaccination, ensure that restaurants and spas are clean and safe places for the public to enjoy, provide robust services to pregnant Mothers and newborns, ensure school aged children receive preventative dental care services and programs, and work closely with our hospitals and other primary care providers.

Sincerely,

Joe Berney, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners