



MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Kate Lieber, Co-Chair
Representative Ron Nosse, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Service

From: Bryan Boehringer, Oregon Medical Association

Date: February 9, 2021

Re: Statement of Support - Public Health Budget and Modernization – HB 5024

The OMA urges your support for full funding of the public health budget and modernization requests. We understand that resources are tight, but not funding these programs would negatively impact public health at a time when all resources are needed to help battle the COVID-19 pandemic. During the last 12 months, we have all seen the need for a strong public health community both at the state and local level.

Public health plays an imperative role in preventative care including STI education and prevention, cancer screening, vaccine education and much more. However, during the COVID-19 crisis, health care has been stretched thin. Local public health is needed to ensure that our communities understand how to protect themselves from disease and ensure that those most vulnerable are protected.

Local public health is also a partner in the COVID-19 vaccine roll out, especially in reaching our rural and smaller community bases. They have been amazing partners during these difficult times and hubs for vaccine distribution. They are an integral part of the health care system and fully funding them would help to take burdens off other parts of the health care system.

Public health has been severely underfunded for years. COVID-19 highlighted the need and important role they play and how the constant underfunding affects their ability to roll out programs in times of need. Putting this burden on hospitals and independent clinics takes away from specialized care that patients need. Provider's roles should be to support public health in times of need not having to take on their burden because of a lack of funding.

As we continue to increase the focus on health equity, modernization of the public health care delivery system would work to eliminate barriers to care, connect hard-to-reach areas and prioritize these communities in crisis. These are areas that our providers work to address but without the support of public health it cannot be achieved. The holistic healthcare approach from all aspects of patient contact allows for more continuity of care and better overall healthcare outcomes for all communities.

For the reasons above, the OMA respectfully recommends that the committee approve HB 5024 and fully fund public health and public health modernization budget requests.

The Oregon Medical Association serves and supports over 8,000 physicians, physician assistants and student members in their efforts to improve the health of all Oregonians. Additional information can be found at www.theOMA.org.