



The Community for Positive Aging

The Next Chapter of The Hollywood Senior Center

Date: April 8, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means - Human Services Subcommittee

From: Judy Lee, Community for Positive Aging

RE: SB 5525

Dear Chairs Steiner and Sanchez; Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg and Smith; Members of the Committee:

My name is Judy Lee from The Community for Positive Aging based in Portland, and I am here to testify in support of SB **5525**, particularly **POP 406**, which will invest \$286 million in further modernizing our statewide public health system, including \$100 million to support community-based organizations like mine.

Community for Positive Aging encourages intergenerational relationships, recognizes the wisdom and experience of its elders, and demonstrates awareness and respect for the aging process. CfPA was founded as Hollywood Senior Center in 1973, a nonprofit committed to creating an uplifting and vibrant environment for adults 55 and older, and expanded in July 2021 by absorbing The Giving Tree, another not-for-profit organization, committed to providing residential services to people living in affordable housing throughout Portland; merger of these two organizations form CfPA. We currently offer programs in the areas of community health, food security, reducing social isolation, and housing stabilization for seniors, as well as those living in low-income housing in Portland.

These past three years have been especially challenging for seniors and those in low-income housing. The pandemic has disproportionately hurt people of color and those with socioeconomic barriers, particularly because of language and technology hurdles. The investment you have made in funding CBOs in conjunction with OHA and LPHAs meant the creation of the first-culturally specific food pantry serving low-income Asian seniors in the State, a program not only provides much-needed fresh produce and groceries which are familiar and bring comfort and joy to those recipients, but also provided resources in their native languages. You also funded 32 vaccine clinics with Spanish and Chinese Mandarin interpreters, 31 resource tables for PPE distribution and health education like how to distinguish amongst Covid, flu, versus RSV in their native languages, and disrupted 34 evictions with rental and utility assistance so they can stay in their homes.

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In the next biennium, expansion of this funding will mean having culturally specific navigators to help BIPOC seniors in connecting with mental health providers who can offer language-specific services; it will mean the low-income community can rely on us, the trusted community resources to translate and explain policies such as the OHP renewal in language they can understand--using posters and graphics instead of long scrolling websites and chatbots. This funding will also provide cooling kits, boxed fans, space heaters, disaster preparation kits for these vulnerable communities in times of crisis, whether that may be extreme cold or hot weather, forest fires, or other disasters. Those who live in SRO housing with congregate kitchens and bathrooms do not have the luxury of space or financial means to store multiple five-gallon buckets or freeze-dried food pouches.

POP 406 will be instrumental in modernizing Oregon's public health system to one that is rooted in community and centered in equity. While I recognize the Governor's proposal to add \$50 million, I urge you to support the full request of \$286 million, which is more aligned with the current need. Such funding will support and expand the services CBOs and other public health partners can provide, as well as provide us with the capacity to build and improve partnerships to support our communities across the state. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Judy T. Lee

Operations Director

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