



Feb 19, 2025

Joint Human Services Ways & Means Committee
Oregon State Legislature
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
900 Court Street NE Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: support Oregon's Public Health Modernization

Dear Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama, and Members of the Joint Human Services Ways and Means Committee,

[Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection](#) is a disability-led organization that serves over 2500 people living with spinal cord injury (SCI) and physical disabilities across the State. Three examples of how our work support health and wellness include our 1) Wheelchair Maintenance Workshops in Portland, Eugene, Medford, and Klamath Falls that are a place for wheelchair users to receive free repairs to their wheelchair when they experience a breakdown; 2) our community health workers educate, mentor, and help clients find resources and services they need to thrive; and 3) educational forums and meet-ups build community and social capital that supports this community in times of need, like extreme climate events that can cause reliable services to shut down.

Oregon's public health system includes federal, state, counties and local agencies, private organizations, community-based organizations (CBO), and other partners. We are a member of CHEC (Community Health Equity Coalition) that represents 195 community-based organizations that receive Public Health Modernization funding through the Oregon Health Authority.

As integral partners in the public health systems, CBOs work to minimize health risks and improve health outcomes. CBOs strengthen the state's capacity to respond to emerging issues that threaten the health of Oregonians. CBOs are trusted within their local communities and are uniquely positioned to reach rural community members, people with disabilities, tribal members and other culturally specific groups who are at greater risk of health disparities.

OHA's current Public Health Modernization budget is for \$110M General Fund and represents essential funding for Local Public Health Authorities, Tribal, OHA and community-based organizations like ours, who are working in partnership with the State.

We are requesting an additional investment of \$25M into public health

modernization budget. The additional \$2M proposed in the Governor's recommended budget does not provide the level of funding that is truly needed to address the unmet public health needs that exist in our state. For example, the Central and Northeastern Oregon disability communities are not supported by community health workers and therefore are not linked to the vast network of community supports and resources in other parts of the State. This community is more dispersed and is exposed to extreme smoke and climate events more frequently. The rural disability community needs a strong public health system as well.

Thank you for your consideration of this important investment in Oregon's public health capacity, and for the opportunity to share the work we are doing in communities across the state.

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Executive Director

Oregon Spinal Cord Injury Connection - www.oregonsci.org

A member of Community Health Equity Coalition

