



February 19, 2025  
HB 5025, POP 410

Co-chairs Campos and Valderrama and members of the committee. I am Sarah Lochner, Executive Director of the Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO). We are the state association for local public health.

While we understand that the legislature's focus is on housing, behavioral health, and education, we implore you to include \$25 million additional or more for Public Health Modernization in the OHA budget.

We believe public health is a crucial yet overlooked component to solving the many crises we face in Oregon. Securing housing and behavioral health services is essential, but these efforts fall short if people die of a communicable, yet preventable disease.

We know that substance use impairs a person's ability to make good decisions about their health. As such, substance use is a contributing factor to Oregon's soaring rates of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis – and in the resurgence of congenital syphilis which had been previously eradicated. In addition, intravenous drug injection using dirty needles is the most prevalent way that folks get infected with Hepatitis C. And right now, Oregon has the fourth highest prevalence rate and the third highest death rate in the country for Hep C, but no dedicated funding to test and treat this disease. Local Public Health Authorities (LPHAs) are eager to expand outreach, rapid testing and treatment, and partnerships with houseless service organizations to better reach this population – but doing so takes increased resources. While some Local Public Health departments have started down this path, significantly more capacity is needed to truly meet the need.

