

Submitter: Stephanie Amargi

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5025

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

My name is Stephanie Amargi, and I serve as the Grants and Development Lead for Daisy CHAIN, a nonprofit organization based in Eugene. I am writing to urge your support for increased investment in Oregon's Public Health Modernization budget.

Oregon's public health system is a collaborative network that includes federal, state, county, and local agencies, as well as private and community-based organizations (CBOs). Daisy CHAIN is one of the 195 CBOs receiving Public Health Modernization funding through the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). As integral partners in the public health system, CBOs play a critical role in reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes, particularly for rural residents, people with disabilities, tribal members, and other historically underserved communities.

Through OHA's Public Health Equity grant, Daisy CHAIN has focused on addressing a pressing public health crisis: the rising rates of syphilis and congenital syphilis in our community. With this funding, we hired a dedicated Syphilis Project Coordinator who has developed an outreach plan and connected with multiple agencies to expand access to syphilis education and testing for pregnant and parenting individuals from our centrally located community center in Eugene. We are seeing an uptick in awareness of this particular program offering. With this momentum, continued funding beyond June would allow us to expand our efforts, reaching even more individuals in need of critical services.

The current Public Health Modernization Budget stands at \$110 million from the General Fund, supporting Local Public Health Authorities, Tribal entities, OHA, and CBOs like ours that work in direct partnership with the state. While the system has made progress since the pandemic, significant public health challenges persist. We are requesting an additional \$25 million investment in the Public Health Modernization budget. The additional \$2 million proposed in the Governor's recommended budget does not adequately meet the scale of unmet public health needs across our state.

Local data underscores the urgency of this issue:

Lane County has seen a steady rise in syphilis cases, more than doubling from 2021 to 2022.

More women and pregnant people are contracting syphilis than ever before, and congenital syphilis cases are increasing at an alarming rate.

Daisy CHAIN is uniquely positioned to address this crisis. Our organization specializes in supporting 1,000+ pregnant and parenting individuals and their families, with focused outreach to high-risk populations facing systemic barriers—including people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and those experiencing substance use disorder. Our staff reflect the communities we serve, and our deep-rooted relationships with local agencies allow us to reach those most in need with person-centered, trauma-informed care.

With sustained funding, we can continue and expand this vital work, ensuring that those at greatest risk receive the testing, education, and support they need.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to strengthening Oregon's public health capacity. I appreciate the opportunity to share how community-based organizations like Daisy CHAIN are making a tangible difference in communities across the state.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Amargi
Grants and Development Lead
Daisy CHAIN