

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

My name is Julia Gutierrez and I am a full spectrum doula and certified lactation education specialist, currently working with Daisy CHAIN (DC) as a Grant Project Manager. I am writing today to express my strong support for Public Health Equity funds.

Oregon's public health system includes federal, state, counties and local agencies, private organizations, community-based organizations, and other partners. Daisy CHAIN represents one of the 195 community-based organizations that receives Public Health Modernization funding through the Oregon Health Authority. As integral partners in the public health systems, community-based organizations work to minimize health risks and improve health outcomes. Community-based organizations 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.

DC's mission is to provide the community with research and evidence based support services for pregnant and parenting individuals and their families. In response to the rise of Syphilis cases in Lane County over the past several years, we have partnered with HIV Alliance and Lane County Public Health to offer drop-in STI testing at our community center. Furthermore, our doulas, peer support specialists and lactation specialists are available to provide education and warm referrals to prevention and treatment resources available. Public Health Equity funds make these services possible.

OHA's Current Public Health Modernization Budget is \$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. Since the pandemic, the public health system has been building up the capacity to address public health needs throughout the state, but there is a great deal more work to be done as threats to our health and well-being persist.

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. Recent executive orders from the federal government have increased fear and apprehension among systematically marginalized populations, especially Spanish-speaking immigrant populations, which prevents them from seeking necessary healthcare such as STI testing and treatment. It is more important now than ever that these services remain accessible through trusted community-based organizations such as DC.

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.

Sincerely,

Julia Gutierrez