

Friday, February 21, 2025

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

Please accept the following written testimony in place of my hoped for virtual testimony on Wednesday. There were so many great people sharing about the critical work they were doing that I had to leave before I had a chance to speak. What a great showing in terms of the value of public health efforts in Oregon!

The Arc of Benton County represents **one of the 195 community-based organizations** that receives Public Health Modernization funding through the Oregon Health Authority. This funding has been critical in enabling us to provide tobacco education and prevention resources and emergency preparedness learning and training opportunities. Our budget would not have allowed us to deliver these critical resources without the funding from OHA.

Not only has this funding made these specific opportunities available to our community, but it has also **strengthened our relationships** with other providers and agencies, both local and across the state. These relationships are **invaluable** as we look toward the **increased need** for services and resources in the face of more, and more severe, natural and human caused disasters and emergencies, and increasing numbers of people with developmental disabilities in our communities to support.

Thanks to phenomenal improvements in medical care, people with developmental disabilities are **living far longer lives**. And thanks to hard-won improvements in social services people with developmental disabilities are living **increasingly community-based lives** rather than being institutionalized. Together, these factors mean that providers of supports and services for people with developmental disabilities have more, and more complex work to do.

The Arc of Benton County is **trusted within our local communities** and can connect with and support community members who are at greater risk for lack of access and inclusion in healthcare.

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 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 and look to increase.

This is all unfolding during a time when the ***stability, funding and other resources from the federal government are diminishing, in some cases disappearing, and in some cases may actively work against positive public health outcomes.***

As a state committed to Public Health Equity and the goals set to reach by 2030 – we ***cannot ignore this new context*** of where we are and how much more it will take to reach these goals, both in terms of dollars spent and the increasingly challenging circumstances that public health workers are dealing with.

We are requesting ***at least an additional investment of \$25M*** into the public health modernization budget. The additional \$2M proposed in the Governor's recommended budget does not begin to cover what is needed to meet the current and foreseeable public health challenges in our state.

As we heard from the public in-person and virtual testimony shared on Wednesday, the money spent in these public health efforts are investments that not only directly help individuals and communities to be healthier, they can also ***save enormous sums of money*** that would need to be spent to deal with the outcomes of not preventing, of not preparing, of not building the relationships and infrastructure now.

Thank you for reviewing and considering this public testimony as we all work for a ***healthier and more equitable Oregon.***

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