

February 4, 2013

TO: The Honorable Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Committee on Health Care

FROM: Melvin Kohn, MD, MPH, Director
Public Health Division
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: HB 2092 – Injury and Violence Prevention Program

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee, my name is Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, Public Health Director at the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). I am here today to ask you to support HB 2092. This bill clarifies and makes explicit the legal authority for the OHA to continue to administer its existing injury and violence prevention programs. It does not provide any new authorities or mandates for the OHA, nor does it allocate any funding. It is essentially just an unambiguous statement of support for the full range of public health activities related to injury prevention in Oregon.

Oregon has had a growing injury and violence prevention program since 1997, because of the recognition that injuries exact a huge toll on the public's health. It may surprise you to hear that injury is the third leading cause of death overall in Oregon, behind only cancer and heart disease. Injuries are the leading cause of death among Oregonians 1-44 years of age. And injuries are also major contributors to health care costs.

Injuries are not accidents – which is to say, most injuries are predictable and preventable. The potential for effective injury prevention is what led to the creation of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control in 1992, and the development of injury prevention programs in almost all state health departments. A wide range of partners have been integral to building and supporting Oregon's program over the years, including partners from the trauma and acute care systems; emergency medical services; local public health; transportation; maternal

and child health; school health; traffic safety; law enforcement; victim's services; mental health; and occupational safety.

Injury prevention programs apply the core public health functions of assessment, policy development and assurance used in other areas of public health practice to injury prevention. That is, they collect and analyze data to understand and monitor the problem, use those data to design intervention programs, particularly in community settings, and to inform public policy debates, and monitor the impact of those programs and policy changes to make sure progress is being made.

Some of the past successes of Oregon's program, achieved with the support of its partners, include work to protect children from bicycle injuries by promoting helmet use, support of Oregon's network of SAFE KIDS chapters, collaboration with the Department of Transportation on highway safety issues, the development of a network of tai chi classes around the state to prevent falls in older adults, and the issuance of data reports on suicide, prescription drug overdose, and intimate partner violence that have informed policy debates in the legislature and community actions on these serious and costly problems. The program together with its partners has been an important contributor to the 53% reduction in child injury that Oregon has seen since 2000.

So if Oregon already has a longstanding and effective program, why is this bill needed? The passage of this bill would be a clear and explicit statement by the legislature of support for the full range of core public health activities related to injury prevention at OHA as well as a statement of encouragement to the many partners in our communities who work with us. Currently our injury and violence prevention program is almost entirely funded with competitive federal grants. As the federal budget picture tightens, competition for those grants probably will increase. The passage of this bill will be concrete evidence of Oregon's commitment to work in this area and will strengthen our grant applications.

So I hope that you will support this bill to help Oregon continue its leadership in injury and violence prevention. Thank you for your attention, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.