

DATE: March 9, 2015
TO: House Committee on Health Care
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, Association of Oregon Counties
SUBJECT: HB 3100

Chair Greenlick, Members of the Committee,

For the record, I am Stacy Michaelson, Health and Human Services Policy Manager for the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). AOC represents the collective voice of county governments across Oregon. I am here today to speak in support of HB 3100, with amendments to be added.

As many of you already know, our association supported the Task Force proposal in 2013. We have closely followed the work of the Task Force and have been supportive of the recommendations coming out of that group. Earlier today, our association took an official position in favor of 3100, with amendments.

My understanding is that there is a great deal of alignment on many of these issues, both amongst advocates as well as with your office, Chair Greenlick. AOC is supportive of the recommended amendments suggested as suggested by CLHO:

- We agree that there needs to be strong shared accountability and oversight between both local and state public health, and share concerns that the current version of the bill diminishes the role of local public health and communities in this relationship.
- We support modifications to the conceptual framework as written to allow for greater local innovation and partnership.
- Similarly, we align with CLHO on the need for language that recognizes public health districts as local public health authorities.
- We also request that communities be required to submit one plan regarding adoption of the Foundational Capabilities and Programs, as we see this as distinct from our work on Community Health Improvement Plans.

We also share concerns over funding and the transition process to this new model of public health. As many of you know, our counties put a great deal of money from their general funds into public health. As Oregon is currently ranked among the lowest nationally in terms of state investment in public health, the onus falls to counties to ensure services are funded. We therefore support the suggestion to make this transition dependent upon availability of state funds and further support removing any changes to the current funding structure and process until the transition is to be made.

Similarly our association values the current relationship between the state and our local public health authorities and the shared services model that exists. I believe a great testament to this is the work our members did as part of the Rules Advisory Committee that met in the wake of Douglas County's announcement that it would be relinquishing its role as the local public health authority.

Commissioner Craig Pope of Polk County represented AOC on the RAC and worked closely with OHA to develop a process that would allow a county and the state to work together to find a way for the county to maintain their role as the health authority when local challenges may otherwise require the county to give up this role. It was our desire that the outcome of this process - and the lesson learned from Douglas County's situation - be a path to providing intervention and support when counties are in need, rather than simply a transfer of duties back to the state.

Because of our commitment to the current shared services model, and our work to maintain a strong partnership with the state, we would also recommend amending Section 115, and holding off on the repeal of ORS 431.375 which spells out the current relationship between the state and local public health authorities until we are ready to make the transition to a new system.

I want to close by reiterating that we value the long hours put in by the members of the task force and appreciate the impassioned conversations that took place regarding public health. We see this as an exciting opportunity to elevate the important role of public health departments in our communities and the need for increased investment in our state. With that in mind, we support HB 3100 and look forward to working with the Committee on amendments.

Thank you.