

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Public Testimony on SB 5526
April 2nd, 2015

Good morning Co-Chairs Senator Bates and Representative Nathanson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Kevin Ewanchyna, MD and I am the Chief Medical Officer for InterCommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization (IHN-CCO) and a Family Physician with Samaritan Family Medicine Resident Clinic and Samaritan Urgent Care Center in Corvallis. I support additional investments in public health to ensure that all women in Oregon have access to reproductive health services; that there is capacity in our state to meet the rising tide of reportable disease; and to ensure that we continue to prevent the major drivers of death and disease in Oregon.

Tobacco use is a major driver of health insurance costs, and IHN-CCO's membership has the second highest tobacco use rate of any CCO in Oregon. Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (TMSA) dollars, leveraged by Linn, Benton, and Lincoln County Health Departments have facilitated a coordinated partnership with IHN-CCO to reduce tobacco use throughout the region.

IHN-CCO is an active partner in the regional Mid-Valley & Coast Tobacco Prevention Initiative which is supported by a grant through Oregon Health Authority titled Strategies for Policy and Environmental Change, Tobacco-Free (SPArC). The SPArC grant is funded by TMSA funds that were allocated specifically for tobacco prevention in the current state budget. While IHN-CCO provides tobacco cessation benefits for members, they are also aware that cessation is an endless and expensive treadmill – and that community level tobacco prevention is necessary to reduce the number of tobacco users.

I have been a longtime champion for tobacco prevention and policy work in the Linn, Benton, and Lincoln county region and serve on the regional steering committee that provides ongoing technical assistance and support to the SPArC project's prevention work in both the community and the medical system. Our regional SPArC project combines the expertise of the CCO in our clinical objectives, with the training and expertise of local health departments to do the population-wide prevention and policy work. For example, local health department staff has worked with local jurisdictions to adopt comprehensive tobacco and e-cigarette ordinances that build on and enhance state statutes.

The TMSA funding that the Mid-Valley & Coast Tobacco Prevention Initiative received supports a public, private, and non-profit partnership. Without the TMSA funding we would not have been able to convene a team of providers, public health professionals, and key CCO staff to assess the tobacco screening and referral process within our regional health system; offer support to social service agencies in the region to connect clients with tobacco cessation resources and protect families from secondhand smoke through establishing tobacco-free property policies; and make progress on establishing stronger local tobacco retail licensing laws in order to reduce tobacco and e-cigarette sales to minors.

If SPArC funding goes away local health department capacity to continue this new work will be severely limited. Our partners will no longer be able to support the staff who work with social service agencies to help low-income persons quit tobacco; help IHN-CCO implement tobacco screening and cessation for all its members; or work to strengthen local tobacco and e-cigarette ordinances.

Continuing the funding of local prevention work with additional TMSA dollars is essential to furthering and strengthening the ability of our communities to address the leading causes of death and disease for all Oregonians.

I urge you to support the funding of this important public health work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Ewanchyna', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kevin Ewanchyna, MD
Chief Medical Officer