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House Bill 2310 - Public Health Modernization

April 7, 2017, House Committee on Health Care, Hearing Room E
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Testimony

Chairman Greenlick, members of the committee, my name is Dr. David Bangsberg and I am here today as Dean of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2310, which helps move forward public health modernization in Oregon.

Nationwide, health departments are being called upon to meet new health challenges, which include emerging infectious diseases, threats from man-made and natural disasters, increasing rates of chronic disease, and recent responses to Ebola and Zika viruses. In Oregon, we can look to seasons of drought and flooding, the looming threat of a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake, and the October 2015 shooting at Umpqua Community College to understand how demands on the public health system are shifting and varied.

At the same time, resources for public health have dwindled. According to the [Trust for America's Health](#), Oregon ranks 31st in the nation for state per capita spending on public health. Oregon relies heavily on federal funds for public health, and further cuts to public health are anticipated as a part of the new administration's budget priorities.

History tells us that when resources are diverted from critical public health programs, we see an increase in disease prevalence. For example, sexually transmitted diseases in Oregon are on an alarming rise. In 2007, only 26 cases of infectious syphilis were reported statewide; this increased 2000 percent to 571 cases state-wide in 2016. Since 2014, 10 infants have been born with congenital syphilis. Rising STDs result from a decline in public health resources to identify and treat affected partners. Without additional resources, we expect this trend to continue.

Oregon is among the first states to respond to these urgent needs by modernizing its public health system. A modern public health system is one that ensures its workforce is well-trained to address our greatest health threats. As the Dean of the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, I am committed to supporting Oregon's efforts to modernize its public health system, and I am proud that Oregon's work will serve as a model for other states to follow.

Please join me in supporting HB 2310.

Sincerely,

David Bangsberg, Dean
OHSU-PSU School of Public Health