

April 7, 2017  
House Committee on Health Care  
Support House Bill 2310 – Implementing Public Health Modernization

Oregon's 34 local public health departments focus on protecting children and families by preparing for, preventing and responding to illnesses and injuries caused by a variety of factors. We are submitting this letter to support HB 2310 and funding to implement the first phase of Public Health Modernization

The Conference of Local Environmental Health Supervisors, CLEHS, supports HB 2310 with an amendment that will include the recommendations for 2017-19 implementation made by the Public Health Advisory Board to implement aspects of the Communicable Disease and Environmental Health Foundational Programs and Assessment and Epidemiology, Leadership and Health Equity Foundation Capabilities. These areas build off of current capacity with a focus to greater accountability to improving health outcomes.

To do this, Oregon's public health system needs funding, as we simply cannot afford to leave our public health departments underfunded and without adequate public health infrastructure until a horrific epidemic, disaster or outbreak occurs. Supporting public health will ensure fair opportunities for health and eliminate gaps in health outcomes, slow the spread of Chlamydia, Gonorrhea and Syphilis and other communicable diseases, improve childhood immunization rates, and increase community capacity to identify, and respond, to environmental health hazards.

Redefining and expanding the work and expectations of public health can help improve the conditions that create opportunities for health. Environmental health complaints related to insects and rodents/vermin, indoor air quality issues, and housing environmental health concerns such as mold and building maintenance could be services that are funded and provided to local communities if funding were available. Increased capacity to respond to outbreaks of diseases in long-term care and other care facilities would be accomplished, decreasing the burden and impact of morbidity on these vulnerable populations. Providing communities with environments that are pre-assessed to help ensure health is supported in that community with viable walk ways, bike paths, and other built environmental health items could be addressed allowing for healthier lifestyles to be adopted and maintained by communities.

The work of Oregon's local public health departments is essential to the health of communities across our state. CLEHS urges your support of house bill 2310.

Sincerely,

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CLEHS Chair 2017  
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