

# Written testimony supporting HB 2310

## Kelley Minty Morris

### Chair, Klamath County Board of Commissioners

Public Health Systems provide the essential services necessary to keep our communities healthy and safe. The public relies on these services being there when they need them. Unfortunately, people often do not understand the resources expended to ensure high-quality services are immediately available to them. Our agencies must be fully equipped if we are to continue providing public health services at an adequate level. There are a variety of public health services that Oregonians rely on throughout their lifespan. Infants are protected with necessary immunizations to prevent diseases such as measles, mumps, and rubella. The community's most vulnerable mothers and children have access to nutrition support and counseling through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Youth and adults have access to clinical support for reproductive health, and communicable disease prevention and treatment. Everyone benefits from clean air and water, and having safe places to eat. These areas are monitored closely and protected by environmental health programs. Families are supported with accurate records, obtaining birth and death certificates from Vital Records.

Currently, more than one-third of Oregon's local health departments cannot provide services beyond minimal requirements. Comprehensive services are crucial to meet the health needs of our communities. Klamath County is the least healthy county in Oregon, ranking 36 out of 36, as reported in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Public Health Modernization would allow for the resources necessary for our public health department to address the negative health outcomes experienced in our community. By transforming the current system, Klamath County Public Health would have the capacity to provide much-needed community-driven programming, to access local epidemiological data, and to address the high health needs in our community. In order to ensure governmental Public Health Systems are functioning at full capacity, we need to upgrade our system by supporting HB 2310.

A modernized public health system is critical in providing reliable and efficient services, keeping the public informed, implementing health policies, and responding to emerging threats. Without modernizing our current system, gaps in care will remain and the services offered will continue to be limited. We want to ensure that all Oregonians, regardless of where they live, have access to much-needed public health services and have the opportunity to achieve optimal health. This can only be done when our communities have the necessary resources to provide essential public health services.

By working together to transform our public health system, we can begin to lay the foundation for a healthier future for all Oregonians. In Klamath County, our residents continue to suffer from poor health and quality of life. Our greatest asset is our people and we are not fully meeting their health needs. This is why I ask that you support HB 2310. A health system transformation, such as Public Health Modernization, will ensure that the health needs of our communities are met.