

Item 6: Department of Human Services

Long Term Care Worker COVID-19 Testing and Training

Analyst: Laurie Byerly

Request: Allocate \$3,350,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Human Services to help protect clients in long term care settings by providing COVID-19 proactive testing and specialized training for long term care workers.

Description: Long term care providers and workers seek funding to help protect clients in long term care settings from contracting COVID-19, through two initiatives:

- 1) A program to reimburse providers and workers for COVID-19 test costs that are not covered by insurance is estimated to cost \$3 million General Fund, which would be allocated to the Department of Human Services (DHS). While testing of frontline workers to date has been limited and prioritized based on COVID-19 symptoms, a recent CDC study on the outbreak of the virus in a Washington care facility revealed that the spread of the virus occurred while staff and residents were asymptomatic. The funding would encourage proactive testing for frontline workers, confirm mild symptoms are not COVID-19, validate negative tests, assist in contact tracing, and support provider contracts with approved testing labs. Test costs range from \$50 to \$200 each depending on the collection method, specific lab, and test volume; the requested amount should fund roughly 15,000 to 30,000 tests in the near term. For context, there are approximately 40,000 long term care workers in Oregon.
- 2) Development of specialized training in infectious disease controls for COVID-19, through an investment of \$350,000 General Fund. DHS would disperse \$150,000 of this funding to Oregon Care Partners, which currently provides state-funded training for family caregivers and care professionals who provide care, services, support, and resources to older adults. Trainings are available to all paid and professional caregivers and family or surrogate caregivers with no charge for participants. The other \$200,000 would allow a workforce training entity, the Long Term Care Workforce Trust, to target training to union-represented Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) working in nursing facilities around the state; these constitute approximately 50% of the statewide CNA nursing facility workforce.

Some of these costs may be eligible for Federal Funds available under the federal CARES Act; use of those funds are still pending federal guidance, determination of statewide needs, and funding decisions. Corresponding adjustments can be made at a later date as those issues are resolved.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend approval of an allocation of \$3,350,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Department of Human Services, with the understanding that the Department of Administrative Services may be asked to unschedule a portion of these funds if appropriate federal resources become available.