

Item 7: Oregon Health Authority

Behavioral Health Services

Analyst: Tom MacDonald

Request: Establish an Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$25,630,000 for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund received by the Department of Administrative Services and transferred to OHA for behavioral health services for individuals disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Description: Consistent with data reported by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), the COVID-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on communities of color and vulnerable populations, particularly in terms of higher rates of COVID-19 illness and mortality. In addition to the physical health impacts, OHA and its community partners anticipate a surge in mental health and addiction treatment needs caused by the pandemic will further deepen the overall health and related economic disparities in these communities across the state. OHA expects the surge to result in people who may have never previously sought treatment for behavioral health concerns to now seek support for needs such as anxiety, depression, and substance misuse.

The requested Emergency Board action supports \$25 million in one-time investments to enhance behavioral health services for individuals impacted by COVID-19, with a focus on communities of color, Oregon's federally recognized tribes, and vulnerable populations. The investment will target crisis and recovery services, emotional support line capacity, outreach, and access to treatment services. The funding will be prioritized as follows:

- \$11,000,000 to help community mental health programs respond to COVID-specific behavioral health needs through culturally and linguistically appropriate services, such as outreach to communities of color, tribes, and vulnerable populations; procurement of telehealth equipment and related training; wraparound support for individuals in isolation; and improving access to telehealth services in long-term care, congregate, shelter, and other sites;
- \$6,030,000 to enhance statewide crisis line capacity and add culturally-specific access lines, develop a single web-based portal for all behavioral health resources in Oregon, including a statewide provider directory, and increase access to tele-mental health services for all Oregonians;
- \$3,300,000 for community-based organizations and Oregon's federally recognized tribes to provide outreach and navigation services to individuals not currently connected to the behavioral health system;
- \$3,000,000 for one-time investments to increase bed capacity in community residential treatment facilities and provide short-term hotel or rental assistance to address the increased need in placements for individuals impacted by COVID-19;
- \$1,700,000 to establish an opioid harm reduction clearinghouse for the purchase and distribution of supplies that prevent overdose and the spread of communicable disease;
- \$600,000 for grants to recovery support organizations to increase community outreach and increase the number of certified recovery mentors available to support high-risk populations.

The identified investments are in addition to actions OHA has already taken within its existing budgetary resources to respond to behavioral health needs resulting from the crisis. These previous actions include, for example, expanding access to telehealth services for Oregon Health Plan members and modifying county behavioral health contracts to provide maximum flexibility during the pandemic.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend establishing an Other Funds expenditure limitation of \$25,630,000 for the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund received by the Department of Administrative Services and transferred to OHA for behavioral health services for individuals disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.