



ALEX CUYLER

Intergovernmental Relations Manager
Alex.Cuyler@co.lane.or.us

DATE: January 22, 2019
TO: Senate Committee on Health Care
RE: SB 253, relating to local public health authorities

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

In 2008, Lane County was grappling with extreme fiscal hardships due to a significant loss of federal timber revenue. We were forced to examine every service for cost savings and explored what it would take to transfer our local public health authority to the State. At that time, the process was not well developed, and statute stated that whatever the State did in the absence of local work would have to be paid for by the county. Thus, when public health modernization was the focus of the Assembly during 2015, Lane County paid close attention to the language that addressed what we term “relinquishment”. Since that time, at least one county has relinquished its public health authority and our understanding of this measure is it evolved from the Health Authorities experience with that process.

We find that SB 253 makes some good suggestions for further improving the relinquishment process, yet request an additional concept that would make this bill better. In particular, Section 3 of the bill could include an additional provision:

- OHA should have a responsibility to periodically (annually?) re-engage with the county that has relinquished to see if they can resume provision of public health services. In the case of Lane County, while 2008 was a particularly bad year, the County came through that challenge and although not perfectly recovered, the situation is not as bleak as it once appeared. We believe a periodic review of relinquishment would be good policy. While there is Administrative Rules which address the return of the Authority to a county, we believe that Rule is flawed.

We offer to the Committee a willingness to at least explore amending this measure to make it better, particularly this early in the Legislative session.

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY BY ALEX CUYLER, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS MANANGER