

# OREGON COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

January 31, 2019  
House Health Care Committee  
Testimony in Support of HB 2600

Good afternoon Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Health Care Committee:

My name is Charlie Fautin. I am the Public Health Administrator for Benton County Health Department and immediate past-chair of the Coalition of Oregon Health Officials, on whose behalf I am testifying today. I am here to support HB 2600 and a pending amendment.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the local public health perspective on preventing the spread of diseases and outbreaks (of any kind) in long-term care facilities. According to data gathered by the Oregon Health Authority in 2017 there were 148 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across Oregon. That is an average of one outbreak every three days. This is not an indication of quality of the facility, outbreaks happen, but we can do more to prevent them.

Local public health authorities are currently required to follow-up on all reportable diseases. Some individual disease, like gastroenteritis strains like, noro-virus do not require follow-up until they become an outbreak (which is two or more cases for noro). For some working in long-term care facilities it may be hard to recognize, without additional training when to report to local public health authorities. This bill will support facility administrators and staff.

That said, with additional recognition of outbreaks by administrators and staff there may be more reporting of outbreaks so including prevention strategies in the bill is crucial. Today I'd like to focus specifically on the part of the bill that will require food sanitation inspections.

Local public health authorities across Oregon have staff trained in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) food code. Local public health provides licensing and twice yearly inspections to more than 12,000 restaurants, over 5,000 pool and tourist facilities and mobile and special events each year to protect the public's health.

Local public health's goal is to protect the health and safety of the public - and to protect business owners by helping to assure that they consistently use evidence-based best practices for food preparation, storage and handling. Most, if not all food-borne illness outbreaks are traceable to some preventable breach of food standards, or to operators and staff not being aware of or up-to-date on those best practices.

As an example, in December 2017 there were 22 Norovirus outbreaks in Oregon. Only one of those outbreaks was in a restaurant which receive twice-a-year inspections and food-safety guidance from local health departments. However, 17 of them (77%) were in long-



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term care facilities where inspections take place much less frequently and may be conducted by staff without the level of training that is required of Registered Environmental Health Specialists employed by local health departments.

Currently, the language in the bill regarding food sanitation inspections is confusing. The Coalition of Local Health Officials has been working with Representative Nathanson's office to include language that would require long-term care facilities to contract with local public health authorities to have two food service sanitation inspections per year, conducted by a Registered Environmental Health Specialist. Local public health is not interested in another layer of regulation but ensuring that those with food safety experience are working closely with facilities to help prevent outbreaks.

Residents of long-term care facilities are among Oregon's most senior and medically fragile residents, and as such are among the most vulnerable to dehydration, weakening and opportunistic infections that are hallmarks of Norovirus and other preventable food-borne infections. Those residents, who often live on fixed incomes and much more limited dining choices, deserve the same rigorous and frequent food-safety protections that you and I will benefit from when we dine out tonight.

Thank you for this opportunity Chair Greenlick. I would be happy to answer any questions you and the committee may have.



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