



March 26, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services  
Oregon 2019 Legislative Session

**Subject: AOC Public Health Budget Testimony on SB 5525**

Dear Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Nosse and Members of the Subcommittee,

As the current First Vice President of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) and on behalf of our state's 36 counties, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 5525.

It's difficult to overstate the impact of the Oregon Health Authority budget to each and every county in Oregon --- but even more importantly, to overstate the daily impact this budget has on the more than one million Oregonians who are directly impacted by OHA services. In my county, Morrow County, 28% of our population receives their healthcare through the Oregon Health Plan. Helping our constituents maintain access to healthcare must be one of our state's highest priorities.

**As part of our basic commitment to the health of all Oregonian's, I believe ensuring the strength of our state's public health system is equally as important as our support for our Medicaid program.** Specifically, Oregon must find a way to fully fund a strong public health system in order to achieve the triple aim. Making larger front end investments in public health is a smart way for us to fundamentally succeed in better population health, a better patient experience and to bend the cost curve.

"I've always been interested in public health approaches because it seems to me we have this yearning for silver bullets, and that is not in fact how change comes about. Change comes through silver buckshot - a lot of little things that achieve results. That's a classic public health approach." (Nicholas Krisof, New York Times Columnist and Oregon native).<sup>1</sup>

**Fund Public Health Modernization: AOC supports funding of \$47.7 million in the 2019-21 budget to implement public modernization.** These investments are needed to achieve sustainable and measurable improvements in population health, as well as to strengthen and expand our local public health system, including a focus on communicable disease control and environmental health programs.

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<sup>1</sup> Kristof was born in Chicago, Illinois, and grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon. He is the son of Jane Kristof and Ladis "Kris" Kristof (born Władysław Krzysztofowicz), both long-time professors at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. His father was born of parents with Polish and Armenian ethnicity from Romania in the former Austria-Hungary, and immigrated to the United States after World War II. Kristof graduated from Yamhill Carlton High School, where he was student body president and school newspaper editor, and later became a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard College.

Communicable Diseases are costly, debilitating, and deadly.

- Oregon has the third highest prevalence rate of Hepatitis C in the nation and African Americans, American Indians, and Alaska Natives are disproportionately impacted.
- Rates of syphilis have increased by 1500% in the past 10 years in Oregon. Syphilis, left untreated, can cause damage to the brain and heart, mental illness, serious birth defects, stillbirth, and death.

Environmental Health threats from drought, wildfires, contaminated drinking water, increased allergens, and diseases spread by ticks and mosquitoes are on the rise.

- Everyone in Oregon was impacted by wildfires in 2018; Portland had days with the second worst air quality in the world in July and in August Southern Oregon had the worst air quality in the country.
- The Oregon Health Authority identified 41 drinking water systems at risk for similar algal blooms to the 2018 Salem drinking water crisis.

**AOC SUPPORTS the following  
2019-21 Agency Policy Option Packages**

**PUBLIC HEALTH**

1. OHA POP 401 – Universal Home Family Home Visiting: **\$4M**
2. OHA POP 417 – The Governor’s Budget includes \$5.5 million of General Funds to support local communicable disease outbreak surveillance programs at the current service level. These General Funds replace Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP) revenues which are no longer available to support other public health programs: **\$5.5M**

Sincerely,



Jim Doherty, Morrow County Commissioner  
First Vice President, Association of Oregon Counties