



Board of Commissioners

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Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services SB 5525 – Public Health Funding

Good Morning Co-Chairs Beyer and Nosse and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Doherty and I am a Morrow County Commissioner and the First Vice- President of the Association of Oregon Counties. I am here today to talk with you about how important Public Health is in my community and what we are doing to protect our community. I hope my words encourage you to invest in Public Health Modernization so all Oregonians can be protected wherever they live.

As part of the funding allocated last session, the Eastern Oregon Modernization Collaboration consisting of 13 eastern Oregon counties, chose to work on Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) prevention in our 13 counties because:

- there has been a 716% increase in Gonorrhea in the past six years;
- Chlamydia reached an all-time high with a 242% increase;
- 2018 data show a 24% increase in Gonorrhea from 2017; and
- Syphilis continues on a steady pace, increasing to 25 cases last year.

This collaborative work will benefit Morrow County, which has experienced an increase in disease reporting overall, with a significant rise in all STIs, and the second highest rate of Gonorrhea in the State per population. However, we have significant challenges addressing these community needs because the Morrow County Communicable Disease (CD) Coordinator also serves as the Emergency Preparedness Program, Region 9 Health Care Preparedness Program (HPP) and Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) Coordinator.

Wearing multiple hats paid for with blended funding streams is not unique to Morrow County. Many of the smaller counties experience similar challenges as staff often cover multiple programs, making it easy to understand why capacity is often challenged. And, Morrow County invests one of the highest per capita investments in Public Health in Oregon (FY 2019 Budget approved \$841,648 County General Funds) and we still face these staffing and health challenges.

Morrow County Public Health embraces the fundamentals of Public Health Modernization by looking at new partnerships and cross-jurisdictional partnerships that benefit the residents in the community. In addition to the work through the Eastern Oregon Modernization Collaboration, we look to find every efficiency and work collaboratively across systems. Here are a couple of examples I'd like to highlight:

- Regional environmental health partnership; Morrow County has an agreement with

- Umatilla County Health Department for the provision of Environmental Health services.
- Morrow County governance is in the process of finalizing an agreement with Umatilla County Health Department to begin providing On Site (Septic system) services.
 - CARE program consisting of Nurses, Community Health Workers (CHWs), DHS Self-Sufficiency staff, Mental Health Counselors and Student Resource Officers (SROs) integrated within the schools, working with students and their families. This is a collaborative partnership through the braiding of funds from Morrow County Government, Health Department and Sheriff's Office, Morrow County School Districts, InterMountain Education Service District, Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. (GOBHI), Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO), Community Counseling Solutions (CCS), City of Boardman, Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub, Port of Morrow, Umatilla Morrow Head Start, CAPECO, DHS, Advantage Dental, Morrow County Health District, Columbia River Health Clinic, Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon University.
 - Morrow County Health Department, in collaboration with Umatilla County Health Department, received federal funding through a Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grant for provision of Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), an evidence-based program targeted to first time mothers, initiated prenatally prior to 28 weeks gestation and continuing until the child turns two years old.

Public Health Modernization can and has benefited eastern Oregon residents living in rural and frontier communities. This collaboration engages with Primary Care Providers, and Health Departments across the region in a concerted effort to reduce STIs. The benefits are consistent messaging and dissemination of information across the region, and support and resources to stop the spread of these STIs.

Additional funding is needed for Public Health Modernization to continue to protect Oregonians from communicable disease outbreaks. These funds have been instrumental in moving from only having capacity to respond to reports of disease, to engaging in a more meaningful way with schools, clinics and other partners. Continued funding for the Eastern Oregon Modernization Collaboration is essential to sustain the Modernization successes we have demonstrated across eastern Oregon, if we are going to stop the spread of disease.

Public Health Modernization is about doing work in new and efficient ways, like Morrow County is doing with current programs and with Modernization funding. These resources and accountability will ensure every Oregonian has the basic protections. Additional funding is required to expand Modernization successes to other foundational capabilities as continued funding at the current level is not sufficient.

In Closing, I understand the difficult budget decisions that you will be making this legislative session. Morrow County Board of Commissioners invests in Public Health because we believe this is a great investment to enhance the health of our residents. We urge you to invest in Public Health Modernization as well.