



Taking action for basic human needs.



To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services
From: Human Services Coalition of Oregon
Date: February 9, 2021
Re: HB 5024, Public Health Modernization

Co-Chairs Nosse and Lieber, and members of the committee,

The Human Services Coalition of Oregon supports Oregon commitment's through the Oregon Health Authority to eliminate health inequities by 2030. But that will not happen if the State continues its long-standing underfunding of Public Health. The Legislature must allocate the full OHA request of \$68.9 million for investments in Modernization of Public Health for us to have any real chance of achieving that goal.

For over three decades, HSCO has convened like-minded advocates in an effort to fight for the policy development and resources necessary to support vulnerable Oregonians. HSCO is made up of over 100 individuals and organizations that work together to develop effective tax, education, health care, housing, human services and economic development policy that together make Oregon a better place for all its citizens. A well running public health program impacts human services across the board.

We are fortunate to have dedicated public health professional performing relentlessly around the state. Despite their best efforts, the public health system they have managed to keep functioning is far from the public health system we need. The demands of this pandemic will be with us for some time, and we need to commit funding for a stable, sustained public health response. Sufficient funding must also support a strategic recovery that ensures a rebuilt public health system more ready and resilient in the future.

As you know, state and local public health authorities completed an assessment of the existing public health system in 2016, as required under ORS 431.115 addressing two fundamental questions: To what extent is the existing system able to meet the requirements of a modern public health system? What resources are needed to fully implement public health modernization?

As stated in the full modernization assessment report at <http://www.healthforegon.org/modernization> it was estimated in 2016 that ***an additional \$105M annually is needed to fully implement a modernized public health system.*** In ensuing state biennium budgets, Oregon has failed to invest beyond a very small fraction of that amount.

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We are paying the consequences of that shorted investment in an under-resourced and vulnerable public health system recoiling from the impacts of a pandemic on top of wildfires and the impacts of climate change, a public health system that can wait no longer for a serious allocation of funding.

Oregon and the Oregon Health Authority made promises in [Healthier Together Oregon](#), the state health improvement plan adopted in 2020, to address the impacts of systemic racism and the trauma of generations of health disparities and to promote health equity for the people of Oregon. Those are hard won promises that our people genuinely deserve to be honored. This is why HSCO supports the original OHA ask of \$68.9m for Public Health Modernization.

Thank you for your time and attention to our state's public health system.

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