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Senator Lew Frederick
Representative Susan McLain
Co-Chairs, Joint Ways & Means Sub-Committee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Oregon State University Extension Funding

Dear Senator Frederick and Representative McLain,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the importance of the Oregon State University Extension Service's Family and Community Health Program. Bolstered by their academic home in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences the program has been able to gain significant inroads into building sustainable community engaged projects to improve the health and well-being of families statewide. This public health approach—vast expertise coupled with local program delivery in 36 county-based Extension offices—engages families, communities, government agencies, and healthcare organizations in preventing health problems before they arise and in developing solutions to existing problems. To ensure sustainability and maximize impact, efforts are community-specific and community-led, where the community is in the driver's seat from the outset, from the time that the problem is identified and defined.

To highlight but a few of FCH's innovative, responsive and nimble community-based health programs, in line with the State's and Counties' Health Improvement Plans' goals:

COVID 19 Response and Recovery

FCH has been at the forefront of responding to the COVID pandemic with place-based faculty creating culturally appropriate educational materials to explain preventive measures to mitigate risk and encourage vaccination. Since most of the workers at a hotspot in a coastal seafood packing plant were Latino and indigenous, FCH Extension faculty helped build a [collaborative team](#) that responded with [Spanish and Mam videos](#). These videos included information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, where to get help locally for such things as getting fabric face masks, filling out rental assistance forms, navigating the healthcare system, and how to get groceries when needing to quarantine. As vaccinations became available the content also included the importance of receiving a vaccine and the logistics of gaining access.

Addressing Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Answering a national call for Extension's involvement in the growing substance misuse crisis, our FCH program and OSU Center for Health Innovation collaborated to create an initiative, [Coast to Forest Oregon](#). The

initiative works with community partners to build on existing, underleveraged state and community strengths and resources to address gaps in educational, preventive and systems-level approaches to the opioid and mental health crisis. As much of the current approaches are treatment-related, partners have been eager to add innovative activities (community health workers outreach, mental health first aid trainings, radio outreach, and more). The existence of a strong infrastructure with place-based faculty supported by college specialists has allowed the FCH program to bring an additional \$1.M in resources to support this work.

Accessing Health Food

Accessing healthy food is a major emphasis of our community programming through FCH. The **FCH SNAP-Ed** program represents the single implementing agency responsible for the \$7+ million dollars of SNAP-Ed funds that flow annually from USDA Food and Nutrition Service to the Oregon Department of Human Services to the OSU Extension Service. With those funds FCH engages in policy, systems, and environment public health strategies, reporting more than 300 changes adopted in 2020 in schools, early childhood settings, food pantries, school and community gardens, as well as a variety of other settings. SNAP-Ed utilizes [FoodHero.org](https://www.foodhero.org), an OSU social marketing campaign designed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among Oregonians with limited resources, to engage with hundreds of partners in Oregon to foster healthy eating, increase physical activity, and incentivize food gardening. SNAP-Ed leverages more than \$1 million in resources to amplify its reach, and is singled out regionally/nationally for our work in health equity, implementing interventions at multiple levels of the social ecological model that result in changes at the individual and sector level to support healthy eating and physical activity.

The Governor's recommended budget flat-lined current funding levels, which would erode current program service levels. Together, we support the request that funding be increased 7.42% from the 2019-21 budget to \$61.9 million in order to continue the essential work; now is not a time to cut programs that have such a powerful impact on community health and well-being.

We recognize you have difficult decisions to make. We ask you to remember that maintaining the investment in OSU Extension will have a lasting impact on Oregonians. The FCH program has been able to gain significant inroads into building sustainable community engaged projects to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families and to improve the health creating capacities of the communities within which they live.

Sincerely,



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