



March 23, 2023

Chair Marsh
Vice Chair Levy
House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment
900 Court St. NE,
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Levy and Members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment,

The Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization ([RDPO](#)) supports passage of House Bill 2990 requiring the Oregon Health Authority to establish a resilience hub program. RDPO is a five-county region spanning Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, and Washington counties in Oregon, and Clark County in Washington and includes Metro, TriMet, and the Port of Portland and many cities within our service area. Our mission is to create a more prepared and resilient region.

Lessons learned from responding to COVID-19, wildfires, severe weather and smoke events demonstrated the key role community-based organizations (CBOs), particularly those that serve people of color, low-income, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, elders or other historically marginalized communities have in delivering essential supplies, information and other emergency support services. CBOs are non-profit agencies providing health, social services or educational services, faith communities, or other similar organizations. CBOs generally are not able to resource preparedness, response, and recovery planning or training for their organizations because they prioritize and are funded for delivering their day-to-day mission-driven services.

In 2022, RDPO committed \$100,000 to capacity-building projects to improve community resilience by investing in organizational capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies. The return on this modest investment has been phenomenal. Outcomes include:

- Improved trust between residents and municipal, county and regional governments, especially residents who have been historically marginalized, including communities of color, immigrants and refugees, people who primarily speak languages other than English, people with disabilities, seniors and other similarly isolated or underserved populations
- Increased capacity and capabilities among recipients to prepare for and be more resilient when faced with emergencies and disasters. Including improved communications capabilities (radios, walkie talkies, other communication tools) developing continuity of operations plans, conducting trainings and exercises to test plans; and building social capital for household

and community-based preparedness and resilience,

In 2020, the Non-Profit Association of Oregon (NAO) conducted a statewide survey to identify the [Impact of COVID on Charitable Non-Profits](#). Below are some highlights:

- 25% of 410 nonprofits did not have continuity of operations plan to address a variety of operational functions and procedures (e.g., revenues or funding, utilities, administrative costs, etc.) in the event of operational disruptions.
- COVID-19 forced 59.7% of the respondent nonprofits to reduce their levels of services or programs.
- Only 16.5% of nonprofits believed they could return to pre-COVID-19 levels of operations within 1-to-6 months. 27.7% of nonprofits believe they would require between 6 months-to-a-year to return to pre-COVID-19 levels of operations.
- Nearly half of all the nonprofits surveyed, 49.2%, reported adding new clientele, services, or programs to their missions. Of these, 77% have added new services/programs specifically to assist with COVID-19 response, demonstrating the essentiality and agility of nonprofits in responding to societal needs and emergencies. Another 22.6% are serving an entirely new clientele altogether
- Non-profits are struggling due to lack of access to technology, including computers, WIFI, phones, and devices used for virtual learning. This affects low-income populations, and those located in rural communities. In addition, several organizations expressed frustration that they lacked the funding and resources needed to meet the technological needs of their communities, especially when it impacts access to education

Community-based organizations are central to thriving communities across Oregon. State and local governments rely on them to deliver necessary services on blue sky days. In an emergency, they play a critical, time sensitive role in communicating with their constituents, distributing resources and supplies, and advising emergency managers and other officials on community needs. Investing in resilience hubs strengthens organizations and communities to be better prepared to respond to emergencies and return to optimal community health, safety and well-being. We are stronger together.

RDPO urges the House Committee on Climate, Energy and the Environment to pass HB 2990 to ensure a more prepared and resilient region. For more information, please contact Beth Crane at Elizabeth.crane@portlandoregon.gov or (503) 956-0328.

Thank you for your consideration,

Vancouver Mayor McEnerny-Ogle, and RDPO Policy Committee Chair
Columbia County Commissioner Magruder, and RDPO Policy Committee Vice Chair

