



# Ko-Kwel

## Wellness Center

630 Miluk Drive, PO Box 3190, Coos Bay, OR 97420  
(541) 888-9494 \* (800) 344-8583 \* Fax (541) 888-3431

### LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

#### **The impact of Public Health Modernization Funding for Oregon Tribes**

*Provided by Kelle Little, Chief Operating Officer, Coquille Indian Tribe, Health and Wellness Division*

Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to share the positive impact Tribal Public Health Modernization funding has had on improving the health and wellbeing of Coquille Tribal members, their families, and the communities they live in.

According to Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, President and CEO, Trust for America's Health, "Investments in public health should be particularly directed to those communities, which due to the impacts of structural racism, poverty, discrimination, and disinvestment are at greatest risk during a health emergency."

Contemporary public health systems have long underrepresented or overlooked Tribes in the US Public Health System. While Tribal Nations have an inherent right to promote and protect the health and welfare of their citizens using the methods most relevant to their communities, the investment in Tribal public health services has been slow and has not always reflected the distinct differences and needs that impact them. Investing in Tribal Public Health Modernization not only saves money by reducing the prevalence of injury and illness across the lifespan, particularly amongst populations that have long standing health inequities, it also empowers community resilience.

The implementation of a modernized public health system, particularly for Tribes, requires not only the recognition that Tribal nations and their organizations are the most qualified to positively implement public health services within their communities, but also that within that system of support there must be consistency and flexibility that allows for sovereignty, capacity growth, and respect for the people and culture.

The increased Tribal Public Health Modernization funding of the last biennium began a trajectory of increased and improved public health services for the Coquille Indian Tribe including:

- Improved delivery of essential public health services with respect for the people and culture.
  - Delivery of the essential public health services by blending the framework designed to protect and promote the health of all people with the Tribal cultural recognition of the importance of community and culture.
- Increased provision of health promotion and disease prevention services/programs within the boundaries of the Coquille Indian Tribe.
  - Including the delivery of more than 7,500 COVID 19 vaccines to Tribal membership, families, staff, and the community at large.

- Provision of public health services by Tribal members for Tribal members
  - Training of public health workforce to deliver community health education, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program and Traditional Tobacco Advocacy.
- Increased capacity to respond to complex public health issues that are coordinated across multiple systems and agencies.
  - Expanded internal capacity to lead governmental initiatives through the hiring of individuals with a more defined expertise in specialized areas such as public health emergency preparedness and emergency management.
- Increased capacity extending beyond operational and technical improvement to encapsulate organizational change
  - Incorporating public health quality improvement methodologies into overall organizational change including strategic planning, performance improvement, change management, and community health engagement.

In closing continued funding is critical to continue on the path for improving public health infrastructure and capacity for the Coquille Indian Tribe.

Thank you.