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February 19, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Human Services Ways & Means Committee:

My name is Pamela Ring, and I am the executive director of The Arc Lane County, a nonprofit agency that strives to improve outcomes for people who experience disabilities by helping them live meaningful lives, be gainfully employed, and recreate in the communities in which they live.

Oregon's public health system is a collaborative effort that includes federal, state, county, and local agencies, as well as private and community-based organizations, alongside other key partners. The Arc Lane County is one of 195 community-based organizations that receives Public Health Modernization funding through the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

As essential partners in the public health system, community-based organizations (CBOs) play a crucial role in minimizing health risks and improving outcomes. CBOs enhance the state's ability to address emerging health challenges by responding swiftly to threats to the well-being of Oregonians. Trusted within their communities, CBOs are uniquely positioned to reach vulnerable populations, including rural residents, individuals with disabilities, tribal members, and other culturally specific groups, who are often at greater risk of health disparities.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) face significant barriers to emergency preparedness, which can result in disproportionately severe impacts during disasters. As part of our Public Health Modernization efforts, The Arc Lane County is addressing these challenges by promoting accessible, individualized approaches to emergency preparedness.

Specifically, The Arc utilizes the CMIST emergency framework and the Cognitopia web-based software suite to support individuals with I/DD in preparing for emergencies. The CMIST framework, designed for emergency planning and response, addresses functional needs in areas like communication, health maintenance, independence, safety, support, self-determination, and transportation (Fordham, 2022). Cognitopia is an executive functioning software tool that enhances accessibility and independence for individuals with I/DD. By addressing gaps in emergency preparedness for people with disabilities, leveraging technology, and actively involving local communities in the creation of personalized emergency plans, we aim to build a more resilient and better-prepared community.

OHA's current Public Health Modernization budget is \$110 million from the General Fund, which is vital for supporting Local Public Health Authorities, Tribal organizations, OHA, and community-based organizations like ours. Since the pandemic, the public health system has been strengthening its capacity to meet statewide needs, but there is still much work to be done as public health threats continue to evolve.



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We are requesting at least \$25 million for the Public Health Modernization budget. The \$2 million proposed in the Governor's recommended budget is insufficient to fully address the ongoing and unmet public health needs in Oregon. For instance, individuals with disabilities are often unprepared for emergencies, contributing to higher injury and fatality rates during disasters (Adams, 2019; Smith, 2009).

Thank you for your consideration of this critical investment in Oregon's public health infrastructure. We appreciate the opportunity to share the important work being done in communities across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pamela Ring'.

Pamela Ring  
Executive Director, The Arc Lane County