



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Lincoln County

541-265-4112

255 SW Coast HWY, Newport, OR 97365

www.co.lincoln.or.us/1005/Public-Health

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

I am urging you to allocate at least \$25 million for Public Health Modernization in the 2025-27 biennium (OHA POP 410).

Public health in the U.S. is under siege—severe staffing shortages, slashed funding, and deteriorating infrastructure—while new health threats, such as rising disease rates, measles outbreaks, bird flu, and low immunization rates, grow more alarming by the day. We are stuck in the "cycle of panic and neglect"—urgent action during crises followed by funding cuts once the immediate threat fades, leaving long-term problems unresolved.

Oregon is falling behind.

A decade after prioritizing public health modernization, Oregon has only funded about one-third of what's needed to sustain essential infrastructure and programs. Meanwhile, Washington State has committed nearly 75% of the \$450 million required for their foundational public health programs, and Indiana allocated a historic \$225 million in 2023. Oregon's public health needs have escalated, but funding has stalled. Federal pandemic relief money is gone, and our system is once again understaffed, underfunded, and ill-prepared to address health crises.

Take Hepatitis C and syphilis—diseases that cause chronic illness and death if left untreated but are preventable and treatable if caught early. Oregon has the third-highest Hepatitis C death rate in the U.S., killing 400-500 Oregonians each year, primarily in communities of color and among those struggling with addiction. Syphilis rates have skyrocketed, with congenital syphilis—transmitted from mother to baby—increasing more than 20-fold. These diseases are preventable, but we need funding to provide critical interventions, education, testing, and treatment.

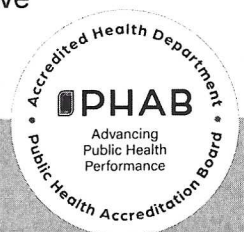
Public Health Modernization (PHM) is the solution.

Enacted into law (ORS 431), PHM focuses on Public Health foundational programs like communicable disease control and health promotion, and foundational capabilities such as epidemiology, emergency preparedness, and health equity. These programs are key to giving every Oregonian a fair shot at better health outcomes.

In rural Lincoln County, PHM makes vaccination clinics accessible, culturally competent, and ensures they're effectively communicated to maximize attendance. This approach helps reduce the spread of diseases like flu and COVID-19, protect vulnerable populations, and improve overall health. PHM also ensures that we provide testing and treatment for Hepatitis C



Lincoln County Public Health
a division of Health and Human Services

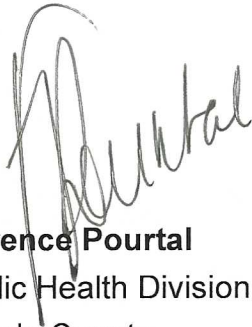


and sexually transmitted infections in accessible locations across Lincoln County. PHM also fosters regional collaboration, allowing us to partner with neighboring health departments, the regional health system, and others to maximize our shared infrastructure and drive better health outcomes. Finally, with PHM funding we strengthened our workforce to boost PH capabilities in performance management, communication, assessment, epidemiology, community partnerships, and equity.

Now is the time to act. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the cracks in our public health system and the current and future cuts to the federal infrastructure and funding could worsen the damage, leaving us unable to adequately respond to the next public health threat.

Our workforce, already stretched thin and burned out, is dedicated to one mission: healthier communities. We must give them the resources they need to succeed. Let's invest in Oregon's public health infrastructure to build a healthier, safer future for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Oregon's Public Health.



Florence Pourtal
Public Health Division Director
Lincoln County

