

February 5, 2026

TO: Chair Reynolds and members of the Senate Committee On Early
Childhood and Behavioral Health
FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica
Pratt
RE: Concerns re SB 1573

Chair Reynolds and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing to flag concerns with the impact of SB 1573 on counties' ability to provide public health and emergency response services funded by the state and the added liability and potential costs to county government.

AOC is committed to supporting counties' ability to provide for the public health and safety of all Oregon communities and we appreciate the problem that the bill sponsors are trying to solve.

A 2000-foot buffer zone (equal to .4 miles) which includes every registered child caring business and the broad definition of syringe service program would pose an untenable barrier to the control of communicable disease outbreaks and other county health and emergency response obligations, including regular mobile diabetes care services and potentially other community health services that we have yet to identify. Those same provisions expose county governments to liability should they unknowingly operate within this broad and ever-evolving buffer zone.

In addition, the "rebuttable presumption" in Section 3 with proposed damages of \$5,000 and the unilateral attorney fee award would create liability risk for any mobile county health program utilizing syringes.

Haste makes waste and we simply do not have the margin for that. Please, let's take the necessary time to ensure sound policy, to create the space for community-led solutions that will actually achieve the desired results, and preserve the flexibility for counties and communities to respond to the health and safety emergencies that will arise and to do the regular business of public health to foster thriving communities and control the healthcare costs to state and local governments. I look forward to working with the bill sponsors to do that.

UNITED COUNTIES. UNITED OREGON.

1212 Court St. NE | Salem, OR 97301-4181 | 503.585.8351 | www.oregoncounties.org

We thank you for your consideration of these implementation and liability concerns and for partnering with counties to serve all of Oregon.

Jessica Pratt
Legislative Affairs Manager
Association of Oregon Counties