



Oregon Public
Health Association

Oregon Public Health Association

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www.OregonPublicHealth.org

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Co-chairs Steiner Hayward and Rayfield and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Nischik Long and I am a public health professional submitting testimony on behalf of the Oregon Public Health Association in support of a strong, well-funded statewide public health system.

The Oregon Public Health Association, or OPHA, is an affiliate of the American Public Health Association and we have over 430 members in every county in the state. We are health educators, doctors, nurses, researchers, professors, community leaders, and citizens who are committed to improving the health of every Oregonian.

Local health departments play a key role in supporting the health of communities across the state of Oregon. They are part of our statewide system which is designed to promote health and prevent disease and disability. It is intended to serve Oregonians' commitment to health by serving the needs of our people, not a bottom line.

I urge you to find ways to maintain the progress local public health departments have made in recent years rather than rolling it back. Local public health departments in our state work to monitor community health status, investigate and control disease outbreaks, educate the public about health risks and prevention strategies, enforce public health laws and regulations such as those concerning tobacco use, and inspect and ensure the safety and quality of water and food.

Investing, and at minimum, maintaining funding for our public health system now will save us money in the long run while the reverse will only create bigger, more expensive health problems in the future. Research shows that, overall, public health spending is one of the most consistent and cost effective determinants of community-level preventable deaths. Research also shows that increasing public health funding is associated with decreasing infant mortality rates as well as mortality rates for some of our leading health problems: heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. ¹

Given uncertainty at the federal level regarding the continuation of the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which is part of the Affordable Care Act, now is the time to keep investing in public health. This federal funding is currently used for some programs that have been slated for state cuts creating a double blow for communicable disease control and tobacco prevention.

With potential reductions at the federal level, Oregon could lose funding in key public health service areas like childhood immunizations, communicable disease control, and chronic disease prevention. With Oregon's public health system transformation efforts, public health modernization, it is now more important than ever that we maintain funding in our public health system to not lose ground on foundational areas of public health work.

Spending on local public health activities is a wise health investment.

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1. *Mays, G. Smith, S. (2011). Health Affairs. Evidence links increases in public health spending to declines in preventable deaths.*