



# Oregon Public Health Association

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February 14, 2019

Co-chairs Dembrow, Power, Bentz, and Brock Smith and Members of the Committee:

I'm writing today to express the Oregon Public Health Association's support for House Bill 2020, the Oregon Climate Action Plan and urge you to quickly advance this important piece of public health legislation.

**Climate change is a Public Health Threat in Oregon.** The Oregon Public Health Association has 480 members in nearly every county in the state. We are public health professionals representing all components of our public health system: doctors, nurses, dentists, researchers, professors, students, community leaders, governmental public health professionals, and citizens who are committed to improving the health of every Oregonian.

There are three things that we would like to highlight as public health "wins" in this bill and two things we would like to highlight as public health concerns.

## **Public Health Wins:**

Public health, as a shared value and principle here in Oregon, is apparent throughout the bill. The bill language recognizes that Oregonians care about clean air, clean water, and our quality of life and identifies that our most vulnerable populations are at greatest risk of climate hazards. The passage of this bill will bring about both air quality benefits that come from the GHG reductions, and the potential for public health benefits arising from investments in our most impacted communities. Specifically, we applaud the following 3 components of the bill, as currently written:

## **Appreciations:**

1. The inclusion of Oregon's public health agency in developing the methodology for identifying Oregon's most impacted communities.
2. The designation of a "public health expert" to be included in the offset advisory committee.
3. The Just Transition Fund's specification of providing mental health services.

## **Public Health Concerns:**

Although public health is recognized throughout the bill, there aren't a lot of guarantees that any of the investments will be accountable to public health outcomes or driven by public health priorities. Additionally, investments described in other sectors, such as in transportation or in natural and working lands, do not currently have any mechanism for considering how investments can maximize public health co-benefits. To address these two concerns, we have the following recommendations:

**Recommendations:**

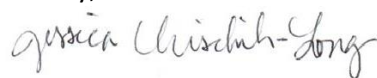
1) Given that protecting public health is a key principle of this legislation, we would like to see public health expertise consulted throughout the development of the implementation of this bill. One obvious way to help ensure this would be to include the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) as one of the agencies engaged in the development of the Climate Action Investment plan.

2) We would like to see local public health jurisdictions specifically called out as potential recipients of investment funds for implementing local climate and health interventions in partnership with community-based organizations that serve and work closely with our most impacted communities. A small amount of funding can go a long way when local public health departments are able to leverage existing community partnerships. Pilot projects through a one-time mini-grant program made possible through federal funds, have already showed that local health departments can get results. In the rural counties of Wasco, Sherman, and Gilliam the local health district helped 50 homeowners in drought-prone areas conduct drinking water quality tests and provided them with educational materials on drought health risks in both English and Spanish. In the Portland-Metro area, the local health department was able to set-up new protocols for large outdoor event organizers so they have the resources needed to protect their summer event participants from heat-related illness. These are just two examples of the kinds of work that local health departments are uniquely positioned to do and they represent crucial actions that can help our communities save lives and build resilience to increasing climate hazards. For more, see: [Local Climate and Health Interventions: Background and Success Stories](#)

**A Cap and Invest program has the potential to achieve Public Health goals in Oregon.** These public health opportunities are outlined in detail in OHA's [Climate Change and Public Health Policy Paper](#) (included in the Committee on Carbon Reduction's December meeting materials and on the Carbon Policy Office's webpage under 'supporting resources and analysis'). As currently written, the bill aspires to achieve public health benefits, but the implementation of investments that achieve these community benefits is not guaranteed. We thank you for considering our recommendations to strengthen these public health protections and for your leadership in advancing climate legislation in Oregon.

On behalf of our membership,

Sincerely,



Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH  
Executive Director