

Health Department

January 31, 2019

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE - HR E
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2600 - Relating to disease outbreaks in congregate care facilities

Chair Greenlick, Vice-Chairs Hayden, Nosse, and members of the Committee, my name is Sarah Lochner and I am the Deputy Director of Government Relations for Multnomah County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of HB 2600. Dr. Jennifer Vines, Deputy Health Officer and medical lead for communicable disease response is unable to be here today because of the ongoing measles outbreak in Washington and Oregon.

Dr. Vines asked me to convey that infectious disease outbreaks in long-term care facilities are an almost daily reality for the Multnomah County Health Department. The better prepared facilities are to detect and respond to outbreaks, the less likely the disease is to spread among the residents.

When communicable disease prevention teams have to spend a lot of time educating facility staff on disease prevention measures it strains their ability to respond to other important communicable disease concerns in the community.

Anecdotally, facilities with staff knowledgeable about outbreak prevention and response tend to stop outbreaks more quickly and create fewer demands on already lean communicable disease response teams. The longer an outbreak of diarrheal disease or influenza goes on, the more risk of illness to residents and the longer they are subjected to the social isolation that comes from suspension of communal activities.

Furthermore, we would be interested in adding language that requires facilities to contract with local public health authorities to have two sanitation inspections per year, conducted by a Registered Environmental Health Specialist registered in accordance with ORS chapter 700. This would be modeled after school kitchen and child care inspections and would not require an additional license for the facility.

The outbreaks in these facilities can be food borne or occur because of poor sanitation practice in the facility. For this reason, we don't want to limit it to just a food inspection. We recommend modeling it after a child care inspection that looks at the entire operation.

Thank you for considering this legislation and our suggested revisions. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Sarah Lochner
Deputy Director of Government Relations
Multnomah County