

Public Health Education Day in Olympia Talking Points: Education Message

Deep cuts to funding for public health services put the health and well-being of every Washington state resident at risk.

Cuts to public health will mean more illness and more preventable deaths.

Without the core services provided by Public Health, we will face:

- more illness from communicable disease like tuberculosis
- bigger, more frequent outbreaks of 20th century vaccine-preventable diseases like measles and whooping cough
- more death and disability from preventable injuries and chronic diseases.

Cuts to public health will result in higher health care costs. For example, every state dollar invested tobacco prevention and control saves \$5 in health care costs.

Cuts to public health will intensify health disparities. While all people are affected by state budget cuts, low-income women and children and communities of color will be inequitably impacted.

Our state's public health system is already in jeopardy. Since the MVET repeal in 1999, state funding for public health has declined. In 2006, the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing identified a \$315 million unmet state funding gap for public health. That gap continues to stand, even as our state's population is increasing.

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We appreciate that the Governor's Supplemental and Biennial Budget proposals seek to retain as much funding for public health as possible.

The Governor's Office and others understand that our state's public health system has already been cut to the bone—and that further cuts will jeopardize the health and safety of our communities.

In the Supplemental Budget, we are particularly concerned about the cuts to the state's Community and Public Health Centers and the 50% reduction to Maternity Support Services.

FQHC:

As you work on the Supplemental Budget in this week and next week, we encourage you to mitigate the cut to Federally Qualified Health Centers, or FQHC. This cut as it stands now would cause many, many clinics to close across our state—leaving many of our state's poorest residents with nowhere to go for preventive and primary care. This means that many people will end up in hospital emergency rooms once a condition has escalated—costing us all more in the end.

Maternity Support Services:

Maternity Support Services is another program that saves the state money by preventing low birth weight births and otherwise ensuring healthy pregnancies and births. This service connects pregnant moms with counseling, substance abuse treatment, social workers, nutritionists and more. Providing quality start-of-life care is the absolute best investment of state can make for the future of our people, workforce and economy. I encourage you to fund this important service at more than 50%.

That said, we know that you have a very tough job on your hands—and would like to ensure that you've heard about some budget solutions. The Governor's Advisory Work Group, convened by the Puget Sound Health Alliance, has numerous suggestions for ways to find immediate savings within the health system. For example, moving to a "generics first" prescription drug policy for Medicaid. I am going to leave a copy of this report for your information.