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Emergency Board Approves Relief to Increase Hospital Capacity, Support Local Communities

The Joint Legislative Emergency Board met Friday to approve emergency funding for urgent statewide needs, including a hospital bed shortage, food insecurity, natural disasters, and other issues facing Oregon communities.

“Your Emergency Board continues to work hard,” Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem) said. “The actions we took today will help our communities with some of their most urgent needs. Hospitals will be able to open more beds. We’ll send food out to fight hunger all across the state. We’ll support our communities as they recover from natural disasters, and help them with their wells. The legislature will be there for Oregon and her people.”

“It’s absolutely essential that the Emergency Board serves all corners of the state,” House Speaker Dan Rayfield (D-Corvallis) said. “We have done that today by approving support for health care workers who continue to treat patients in crisis conditions, rural communities that have been devastated by natural disasters, Oregonians struggling with food and housing insecurity and much more.”

In response to the ongoing health care capacity crisis, the Emergency Board approved \$35.4 million in funds to address the shortage of available beds in hospitals and long-term care facilities. The Emergency Board approved:

- \$21.8 million for contracts with nurse staffing agencies to support the short-term staffing needs of hospitals and long-term care facilities.
- \$4.4 million to continue operations of two respite shelters in Jackson and Marion Counties, freeing up hospital beds for individuals requiring a higher level of care.

- \$4.2 million to establish an incentive program for adult foster homes, residential care facilities, and in-home care agencies accepting individuals who are ready to be discharged from the hospital.
- \$2.3 million to increase the number of available Enhanced Care Facility beds by recruiting additional facilities and increasing rates.
- \$1.5 million for the Community Based Care Distressed Provider Relief Fund to support long-term care facilities in underserved areas at risk of closure.
- \$750,000 to the Oregon Medical Coordination Center for the hiring of staff to track bed availability and coordinate patient transfers around the state, and for grants to six regional hospitals.
- \$500,000 to support licensed and indigenous health care translators with one-time payments through the Oregon Worker Relief Fund.

Other items approved Friday by the Emergency Board include:

- \$5 million to the Oregon Food Bank to support the purchase of an estimated five million pounds of food for individuals and families around the state seeking food assistance.
- \$5 million to address dry domestic and community wells in Klamath County.
- \$2 million to the City of Echo to stabilize the banks of the Umatilla River after recent floods.
- \$2 million to help Wallowa County recover from severe storm damage.
- \$882,000 to support immediate public health work addressing water quality issues in Morrow and Umatilla counties.
- \$550,000 for initial Emerald Ash Borer response.

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