

Public Employees' Benefit Board  
 1225 Ferry St SE  
 Salem, OR 97301

January 13, 2012

Dear PEBB Board,

The Health Engagement Model (HEM) Joint Labor Management Committee was formed to discuss the success of the HEM. The committee is highly supportive of the concepts that underlie the Health Engagement Model. The active engagement of PEBB members in improving their health would help participants live longer and healthier lives and bring down the costs of health insurance for state workers.

However, safe and healthy workplaces are not a given for state workers, and we have much work to do to ensure state worksites support health through education, supportive benefits, and supportive environments. Ensuring a successful HEM is a key component of a comprehensive approach to worksite wellness.

Over the next 18 months, the HEM Joint Labor Management Committee will be discussing a variety of issues related to the HEM, including the following: 1) issues around the HEM immediately affecting PEBB members; 2) communications with PEBB members regarding the HEM; 3) assessment of the HEM; and 4) investment of the savings from the HEM to further the wellness of PEBB members.

At its first public meeting, the Committee formed a series of recommendations addressing issues immediately affecting PEBB members related to the HEM and communications, and is submitting these to PEBB for its consideration and response.

### **Primary Recommendation**

#### **Continue the HEM, but do not charge any of the HEM surcharges in 2012.**

Rationale: Without taking the time to educate PEBB members of the value of a HEM, address people's concerns around the privacy of their health risk assessment information, and begin paying attention to people's work environments, it is hard for many PEBB members to see the HEM as something positive. Use the year to evaluate all impacts and promote the reasons and benefits then determine if fees are necessary for 2013. PEBB members will be more ready for change following a period of education. Introducing the HEM surcharges for non-participation at a time when PEBB members have been asked to pick up a portion of their health care premium, take furlough days, endure a wage freeze, and face unprecedented workloads, may jeopardize the long term success of the HEM and distract from the focus on health.

### **Alternative Recommendations**

#### **Allow PEBB members to enroll in the HEM throughout the year, and provide at least 45 days to complete the questionnaire and e-lessons.**

Rationale: Some people may decide to participate once they know more about privacy protections and the actual requirements of the HEM, or when they are ready to engage in their own health. If the overall goal is increased employee wellness and lower healthcare costs, allowing individuals to participate when they are ready will assist in meeting these goals, both for PEBB and for the employee. Not all individuals are ready to change their health behaviors at the same time, and when a person is ready for change, the system should be there to meet their needs.

**Provide an additional 30 day grace period in 2012 for missing deadlines for doing the Health Assessment and e-lessons.**

Rationale: PEBB members are still learning how and where to access the HEM materials. Many members may be unaware of the deadlines associated with completing the HEM questionnaire and e-lessons. It can take a week or longer just to get signed up for electronic access to the insurers' materials (e.g., passwords are mailed). Once online, PEBB members have to find the Health Assessment, take it, review the results, find the e-lesson choices, choose and then do the e-lessons. This is a new activity, will be time consuming, and won't have as much value if it has to be rushed in order to meet deadlines. PEBB members need the opportunity to practice and to have a positive experience learning about possible health risks and how to address those risks.

**Change the surcharge for couples with one non-HEM participant to \$20/month rather than \$35.**

Rationale: The current surcharge structure provides no incentive for at least one person in a couple to participate in the HEM. Every person who participates will lower costs. There should be some incentive for one partner in a couple to participate if they wish to do so, even if the other does not. Under the current arrangement, an individual member non-HEM charge is \$20 per month and the charges for a couple with one or two non-HEM participants is \$35 per month.

**Pro-rate HEM surcharges for part-time workers.**

Rationale: Part-time workers are hit twice as hard as full time workers around all of the PEBB surcharges. Pro-rating the HEM surcharge is a fairness issue – part-time workers have to pay a pro-rated share of their insurance costs or sign up for a plan with fewer benefits and still must pay a much larger portion of the premium on this reduced plan compared to full time workers. Given that part-time workers already pay a disproportionately large amount toward their health care compared to full time workers, the HEM fees compound their health insurance costs in an unfair way.

**Additional Communications-Related Recommendations**

**Continue proactive, frequent, visible communications and wellness support for PEBB members throughout the year.**

Rationale: For PEBB members to be supported in taking charge of their health and making health improvements, a proactive health promotion effort needs to be carried out on an on-going basis for all state agency worksites. This can include communications, creating workplace environments that support employee health, and working with Staywell coordinators and agency wellness committees.

**Begin proactive and ongoing communication beginning in early January 2012 to provide information on 1) the rationale for the questions in the Health Assessment and how they relate to health improvement and taking charge of one's health, and 2) the security of the information - who will have the information, how it is stored and for how long.**

Rationale: Some PEBB members are challenging the value of the questions in the Health Assessment and do not see the relationship to improving their health; they only see intrusive and uncomfortable questions. For example, many PEBB members are likely unaware that questions about first menstrual cycle are asked as a means to assess cancer risk in women. Similarly, members are not likely aware that waist size is a proxy measure for Body Mass Index and other measures of obesity and metabolic syndrome, which can predict risk for cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and other debilitating and deadly conditions. This a great time for PEBB members to learn about health risks and how to take charge of their health, but individuals need information and the opportunity to make choices about answering those questions. PEBB members are also concerned about privacy and security of their health information. Addressing these questions and

concerns with clear communication and facts about how the information is protected would help members engage in their health and use the tools available to them.

The HEM Joint Labor Management Committee appreciates that PEBB took the time to address a concern raised by PEBB members regarding the tobacco surcharges during its December meeting and changed the tobacco surcharge structure to support those who succeed in quitting tobacco use mid-year. The HEM Joint Labor Management Committee also appreciates the conversations it has had thus far with PEBB staff and is looking forward to continuing to work together to improve communication with PEBB members around the HEM.

Thank you again for taking the time to thoughtfully consider these recommendations and the Committee looks forward to your response.

Sincerely,

HEM Joint Labor Management Committee

AEE Representative and Staff: Joelle Davis

AFSCME Representatives: Judith Anderson, Dept. of Justice; Dana Huddleston, Dept. of Environmental Quality; Marsha Morin, Dept. of Public Safety Standards and Training; Amanda Rasmussen, Dept. of Corrections; AFSCME Staff: Issa Simpson

SEIU Representatives: Keary DeBeck, Dept. of Justice; Sabrina Freewynn, Oregon Health Authority; Shaun Parkman (alternate), Oregon Health Authority; Lois Yoshishige, University of Oregon; Wednesday Martin, Dept. of Human Services; SEIU Staff: Siobhan Martin

Management Representatives: Donna Bennett, Dept. of Administrative Services; Jean O'Connor, Oregon Health Authority; Jane Moore, Oregon Health Authority; Mary Kearney, Dept. of Administrative Services