



Testimony for House File #3005 to the Preventive Health Committee
February 9, 2022

BACKGROUND:

MDH had a climate change program that had to be dismantled when the program did not receive a climate change grant that they applied for through CDC. There were many states besides Minnesota who were not funded this past year (funding would have started in late summer/early fall of 2021). While there are many programs in MDH who are using epidemiological methods to monitor and surveil around the issues of climate change (think infectious disease, asthma, drinking water protection and occupational health), without a climate program, there is no consistent uniform voice to communicate the urgent changes that need to be made to protect health from the effects from climate change.

State of Minnesota

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. F. No. 3005 NINETY-SECOND SESSION

Authored by Acomb and Long 02/01/2022

*The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Health Finance and Policy
A bill for an act*

1.2 relating to health; appropriating money for a climate and health program.

1.3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.4 Section 1. APPROPRIATION; CLIMATE AND HEALTH PROGRAM.

1.5 \$400,000 in fiscal year 2023 is appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner

1.6 of health for a climate and health program to prepare for and respond to climate change and

1.7 its impacts on public health.

TESTIMONY

Thank you Madam or Mr. Chair and members of this committee for the opportunity to voice our support for House File #3005 that would appropriate money for a climate and health program under the Minnesota Department of Health.

My name is Elizabeth Moe and I am the current President of the Minnesota Public Health Association (MPHA). MPHA is a statewide independent public health association comprised of over 350 members representing a wide variety of public health disciplines. Established in 1907, MPHA has been dedicated to creating a healthier Minnesota through effective public health

*The Minnesota Public Health Association is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
MPHA, PO Box 14415, Minneapolis, MN 55414, <https://mpha.net/info@mpha.net>*



practice and engaged citizens. MPHA is also one of the 14 MN health professional organizations that signed the Minnesota Declaration on Climate Change and Health declaring climate change a health emergency.

Climate change is a critical issue and is acknowledged to be one of the greatest threats to public health. As we face the growing threat of climate change to our health, our communities, our environment, and our economies, we request that you authorize funding for MDH to maintain and grow a robust climate and health program.

In addition, we know that the most vulnerable in our State are disproportionately impacted by climate change. This includes children, seniors, pregnant women, low-income communities, communities of color, people with disabilities and chronic disease. Climate change threatens individual and community health, with the greatest impacts on the communities least resourced to adapt to and address these changes. Communities of color, low-income communities, Indigenous people and people with disabilities and chronic illnesses are at highest risk for impacts from climate change. Now more than ever we need the expertise of MDH to address the climate crisis as a health emergency.

MPHA, in our most recent policy resolution around climate change, recognize that public health professionals are best poised to prevent, detect, and manage the health implications of climate change. Public health needs to be the leading voice in advancing climate change strategies and interventions that have co-benefits for all.

Our climate is already changing and we are seeing the public health impacts today. MDH should continue to play a critical role in research, education, health tracking and technical assistance on an array of issues including extreme heat, drinking water protection, vector-borne diseases, respiratory and mental health, sustainability, and emergency preparedness. While these many programs within MDH are researching the impacts of climate change in Minnesota, without a climate change program, there will not be a place to pull all these issues together so that the surveillance, data, and recommendations around climate change can be clearly communicated.

It is also important that MDH have the capacity to work with communities, health care systems and local health departments in assessing their vulnerabilities to climate change, choosing the adaptation solutions that work for them and implementing actions that will increase their resilience to climate change. The time for action is now. Climate change disproportionately impacts the health of at-risk Minnesotans, and we need to put resources where needed to strengthen Minnesota's capacity for providing an effective health response to climate threats. While MDH has had a Climate Health Program in the past, funded by a federal grant from CDC,



and even though we are no longer getting the federal money, we cannot afford to stop this important work!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of MPHA.

Submitted documents with this written testimony:

1. MPHA Climate Change Resolution-Approved 2021.pdf
2. Gov Tim Walz letter MDH 12-14-21.pdf