



May 10, 2022

Senator Jim Abeler
Senator Paul Utke
Senator Mark Koran
Senator Michelle Benson
Senator John Hoffman

Representative Tina Liebling
Representative Jennifer Schultz
Representative Aisha Gomez
Representative Dave Pinto
Representative Tony Albright

RE: Public Health Funding Provisions in the HHS Omnibus Supplemental Budget Bill

Dear HHS Conference Committee Members:

The Association of Minnesota Counties and the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota appreciates your continued support of local public health departments throughout our state who are fulfilling core, state-mandated services that protect and promote the health of all Minnesotans. Thank you to Representative Liebling, Senator Benson and many others for their historic, thoughtful and bipartisan support of local public health last session. We continue to work to capture lessons learned from COVID-19, which revealed the need for continued strengthening of our public health system. As you meet in conference, we would like to highlight a few priority items in the HHS omnibus supplemental budget bills that would help local public health departments best serve their communities and address local public health priorities:

- **Public Health System Transformation**

Thank you to the House for inclusion of approximately \$23.5 million per year to support local and tribal public health through direct grants and additional state level support. Foundational public health responsibilities are skills that need to be available in health departments so the public health system can work as a whole. Currently, the capacity of Minnesota's local health departments varies widely across the state. Foundational capabilities need to be in place in each health department, so they are always ready to serve their communities. Local health departments should have a baseline of organizational competencies such as assessment and surveillance of health threats, emergency preparedness and response, infectious disease prevention and control, communications, development of community partnerships, administrative competencies, and a strong workforce they can leverage to protect public health. Investing in prevention and a strong local public health infrastructure pays off by saving health care and other public program costs, such as those from corrections and child protection.

- **Public Health Emergency Preparedness**

Another identified need of local public health is strengthening the local and tribal Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) system. **Thank you to the House for inclusion of \$9 million per year, with 90% of those funds directed to the local level to support this important work.** Responding to disasters and emergencies—whether health focused or not—is a core responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the need to have a strong infrastructure that can support a robust response to emergencies, both through planning and response. Currently, Minnesota's PHEP activities are funded by grants from the federal government, with no state-level investment. Past proposals to redistribute emergency preparedness funds and a series of funding cuts have compromised local public health's ability to respond to emergencies

such as COVID-19. This investment will be key in stabilizing our system and ensuring strong future response.

- **Family Home Visiting**

Family home visiting is a voluntary, home-based program that supports new parents and their babies in their social, emotional, health and parenting needs. The first years of a child's life are particularly crucial to their long-term development. Family home visits are an effective way to prevent child maltreatment, promote healthy childhood development and foster self-sufficient families—all of which help to reduce public program costs. Supporting Minnesota's families and youngest residents is a key priority for local public health. **Increased investment in family home visiting will allow local public health and community organizations to serve more families in need and make sure all Minnesota children get a healthy start.**

Local public health agencies are on the front lines every day to protect and promote the health of our communities. To do so successfully requires investment in these crucial programs. We ask for your support of these critical sources of public health funding and look forward to continuing to work with you to advance prevention strategies that promote the public's health.

Sincerely,



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