

April 14, 2021

Representative Rena Moran
Chair, Ways & Means
449 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Tina Liebling
Chair, Health Finance and Policy
477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Moran and Chair Liebling,

I am writing to you today to express my appreciation for the inclusion of so many sustained investments for improving public health in the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill. As the last year has taught us, public health has never been more critical, but you can't wait for a pandemic or other emergency to make investments. We also know that prevention saves money, prevention saves time, and most importantly, prevention saves lives. I greatly appreciate your efforts and want to highlight MDH priorities included in this bill.

Sustained Investments

Thank you for shoring up the MDH public health emergency account. When the legislature passed the initial COVID funding bill last March, we never imagined how costly this response would be. We are appreciative to the legislature for this sustained investment in public health preparedness in Minnesota.

Additionally, I was pleased to see new investments to support local public health and address health disparities. The COVID vaccine rollout has been one of the most ambitious public health endeavors in the history of our country, but because of Minnesota's strong vaccine ecosystem, we have consistently been one of the nation's leading states for our rollout. However, we know we can always do better. This is why I'm also pleased to see the inclusion of language to strengthen our vaccine equity work, and I know that we are already incorporating lessons learned over the past year about equity and outreach to strengthen the Department's work to address disparities going forward.

Tobacco Cessation and Prevention

I am so pleased to see the new investments in tobacco cessation and prevention included in the House Taxes bill, but would like to work with the Committee to see the funding sunset removed as this will be an important resource for public health prevention and reducing tobacco use in Minnesota.

Administration Priorities

We are especially appreciative of the inclusion of the Governor's Budget proposals making SGSR adjustments for newborn screening and the asbestos and radioactive materials programs. I would also

like to thank you for including several of our policy proposals, including securing access to birth and death records, adding general surgery to the international medical graduate program, an update to the Ground Water Protection Act, and several Housekeeping proposals.

Agency Operating Adjustment

Finally, I appreciate the inclusion of the operating adjustment for the Department to help us maintain our current services as the cost of doing business rises each year.

While the importance of public health has never been clearer, the importance of investing in prevention cannot be overstated: We spend 80% of our health care dollar treating chronic diseases. These are diseases that can and should be prevented. If we want to address the growing burden that health care is placing on our state budget, we should be doing what we can to keep people healthier for longer.

Thank you to Chair Lieblich for your efforts in creating this bill and thanks to both of you for your investment in prevention and in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan K. Malcolm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jan K. Malcolm
Commissioner

Cc: Representative Pat Garofalo, Representative Joe Schomacker, Representative Ryan Winkler, Representative Melissa Hortman, Representative Kurt Daudt