

May 9, 2022

Dear Representative Liebling and Senator Abeler:

On behalf of the Minneapolis Health Department, I am urging you to include the following provisions in the final conference committee report:

- **Increasing the investment in Local Public Health:** The House HHS Omnibus Bill includes \$23.5 million/year in ongoing funding to support the public health system, including \$20 million/year in grants to local public health and \$1 million to tribes to fulfill foundational public health capacities. It would also create an Office of American Indian Health within MDH and provide additional staff to support local and tribal public health. An additional \$1 million would help fund the Minnesota Public Health AmeriCorps program. While last session's increase to the Local Public Health grant was appreciated, additional funding is needed to address growing public health disparities as a result of the pandemic and chronic disinvestment.
- **Building Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Infrastructure:** The House HHS Omnibus bill includes a proposal for \$9 million/year to support PHEP and requires at least 90% of funds to go to local and tribal public health. Emergency preparedness is a mandated responsibility of local public health, which has historically only been funded at the federal level. With funding cuts over time at the federal level, this state investment will ensure we are prepared to respond to emergencies, from threats like COVID-19 to natural disasters.
- **Family Home Visiting:** The House HHS Omnibus bill includes \$62 million/year to support family home visiting, with a focus on reaching universal home visiting for families that want it. Currently, we are only able to provide home visiting to a small percentage of vulnerable families in Minneapolis. Evidence based home visiting has been shown to reduce infant death and disability, improved parenting skills, decreased childhood trauma and improved school readiness.
- **School Health:** The House HHS Omnibus bill establishes a program to provide grants to support existing school-based health centers and establish new centers. In Minneapolis, our school-based health clinics provide physical, mental health and health education services to adolescents at 8 high-schools serving 4,000 students annually. Funding streams however are unstable and insufficient to meet the needs of students especially the rising mental health issues tied to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- **Lead poisoning Prevention:** The House HHS Omnibus bill lowers what constitutes an elevated blood lead level and triggers public health response activities under the Lead Poisoning Prevention Act. In the last five years 527 Minneapolis children were poisoned by lead. Currently, there are over 3,000 children in Minneapolis schools who were lead-poisoned before they entered kindergarten. Federal, state and local funds are cobbled together to provide lead poisoning prevention and remediation services to our community. Much of this funding is temporary and permanent state funding is needed as much of our rental housing stock was built before the use of lead paint was discontinued.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to local public health departments and urge you to continue to strengthen the work that we can accomplish together with our community. Please reach out to me or Patty Bowler, Director, Policy and Healthy Communities at 612-919-3796.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heidi Ritchie".

Heidi Ritchie  
Interim Commissioner of Health