



MINNESOTA LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

February 7, 2023

Commissioner Brooke Cunningham
Minnesota Department of Health
P.O. BOX 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

RE: Support for Telehealth in Libraries Grant Pilot Program

Dear Commissioner Cunningham,

On behalf of the Minnesota Library Association (MLA), we are pleased to write this letter in support of the Telehealth in Libraries Grant Pilot Program included in the 2024-2025 Governor's Biennial Budget Recommendations. Minnesota's public libraries would welcome this general fund investment to address health inequities and address the digital/broadband divide that prevents underserved communities from accessing health services. With grant support, telehealth services provided by local libraries have the potential to help improve access to health services, reduce health inequities, and improve health outcomes for people who are traditionally underserved.

Minnesota's public libraries fill the gap by providing access to technology, spaces, and information – all without a fee. Public libraries are free, accessible, and welcoming to community members, and library staff around the state are regularly assisting patrons with their social, health, and well-being needs. Minnesota has 12 regional public library systems representing a total of 382 libraries. At a public library, community members can use public computers with internet access, Wi-Fi, check out Wi-Fi hotspots, and even use maker technology such as 3D printers. Library staff provide drop-in and appointment-based technology help and formal technology classes. Libraries can offer technology, space, staff help, and access to telehealth so Minnesotans who live in rural areas, are older, who are lower income and lack internet access can participate too.

Grant funding will support construction of telehealth pods or kiosks, development of and collaboration with health care and community-based organizations to provide and supervise community health worker/health navigator staff, and associated administrative costs.

MLA strongly supports this pilot program and are looking forward to increasing health and well-being needs across the state.

Sincerely,

Julia Carlis
Julia Carlis
MLA President
Senior Library Manager,
Washington County Library

Mollie Stanford
Mollie Stanford
MLA Legislative Chair
Regional Librarian,
Arrowhead Library System