

March 14, 2022

Members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee:

The Minneapolis Health Department is writing in support of HF 4103 which would provide funding to local public health departments to improve their capacity to respond to all types of emergencies. In addition to the COVID-19 response, we have responded to the H1N1 pandemic, the North Minneapolis Tornado, as well as the 35W bridge collapse.

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 Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) activities are funded by grants from the federal government, with no state-level investment.

Past proposals to redistribute PHEP funds and a series of funding cuts highlight the vulnerability of federal funding have compromised local public health’s ability to respond to emergencies such as COVID-19. Although there has been increased federal investment due to COVID-19, historically, federal funding has been cut drastically (from nearly \$16 million in 2002 to \$9.2 million in 2019) and funding expectations were not realigned to reflect the cuts.

Increasing the investment in Minnesota’s public health emergency preparedness programs will directly impact the planning and response capacity of the state’s community health boards. The current dependency on federal funding, and duties associated with that funding, has limited the scope of emergency preparedness work. A state-level investment could support greater flexibility on, and support for, activities that benefit all Minnesotans.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of investing in preparedness programs and in our state’s public health emergency preparedness workforce. Minnesota is a leader in public health and can emphasize that leadership by increasing the capacity of emergency preparedness work through support of HF 4103.

We appreciate your potential support for increasing local public health’s ability to respond to community emergencies. Please don’t hesitate to contact me should you need more information.

Sincerely,



Heidi Ritchie
Interim Health Commissioner
Minneapolis Health Department