



May 1, 2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Senator Kelly Morrison
Senator Liz Boldon
Senator Robert Kupec
Senator Jim Abeler

Representative Tina Liebling
Representative Robert Bierman
Representative Dave Pinto
Representative Heather Keeler
Representative Joe Schomacker

RE: Public Health Funding Provisions in the HHS Omnibus Budget Bill, SF 2995

Dear HHS Conference Committee Members:

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA) appreciate 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 Chair Liebling, Chair Wiklund and many others for their thoughtful support of local public health during the last several sessions. As you meet in conference, we would like to highlight a few priority items in the HHS omnibus 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 both bodies for the inclusion of funding to support local and tribal public health. Local health departments need stable and long-term funding to make sure all communities across the state have equitable health outcomes. We hope you'll consider an investment of at least \$15 million per year, on an ongoing basis, to support our local health departments. Foundational public health responsibilities are skills that should 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, 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. We look forward to working with you into the future to continue building the foundation of a strong, statewide public health system in Minnesota.

- **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 both bodies for the inclusion of \$8.4 million per year directed to the local and tribal public health level to support this important work.** Responding to disasters and emergencies—whether health focused or not—is a core responsibility of Minnesota's public health system. 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. 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. **We are thankful for the substantial investments both bodies have made and encourage adoption of these investments in the conference report.**

- **Addressing Workforce Challenges in Public Health Careers**

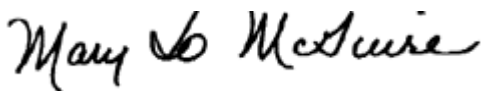
We appreciate the inclusion of provisions that address workforce challenges in local public health. Minnesota's local health departments have seen significant turnover in leadership and staff since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Thank you for inclusion of funding to support the Public Health AmeriCorps program in both bills. We also hope the final bill will include funding to expand the role of Community Health Workers in Minnesota.** Both programs will be valuable in building public health capacity and recruiting a new, diverse, governmental public health workforce.

- **Additional Provisions that Support Community Health**

LPHA and AMC supports the inclusion of various prevention-related provisions in the bill. We appreciate the House's inclusion of support for peer lead mental health programming, comprehensive drug overdose prevention, Medicaid and MNCare coverage for all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and counseling, and the MN Uninsured and Underinsured Adult Vaccine (UUAV) Program. We appreciate the Senate's inclusion of support for addressing extreme weather events and reinstating fetal and infant mortality case review. Thank you for provisions in both bills that create MDH offices with a focus on American Indian and African American health; dedicate JUUL lawsuit settlement funds to commercial tobacco prevention activities; expand funding for family planning special project grants; address lead exposure in schools; expand school-based health clinics; address long COVID; and focus on HIV prevention.

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 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,



Mary Jo McGuire
Association of Minnesota Counties, President
Ramsey County, Commissioner



Maggie Rothstein
Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, Chair
Aitkin-Itasca-Koochiching Community Health Board,
Community Health Administrator