



# Association of Minnesota Counties

March 28, 2023

**RE: HF 2930 – DE Amendment**

Chair Liebling and Members of the Committee:

The Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA) and the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) appreciates your continued support of local public health departments throughout our state who are fulfilling state-mandated services that protect and promote the health of all Minnesotans. We would like to highlight several critical items in the Health omnibus budget bill proposal that would impact the ability of local health departments to serve their communities and address local public health priorities:

- **Public Health System Transformation**

Thank you for your ongoing support to increase the capacity of our local and tribal public health departments. We appreciate the inclusion of funds for these health departments to fulfill foundational public health responsibilities. Specifically, the bill directs \$15 million to local public health and \$750,000 for tribal public health foundational responsibilities in FY 24-25. In FY 26 and beyond, we hope there is opportunity to bring this funding in-line with the FY 24-25 investment. While it is challenging to estimate the cost needed to fully fund Minnesota's public health system, national estimates indicate there is a \$32 per person gap between what local health departments spend now and what they would need to spend to fully meet public health responsibilities. In Minnesota, this translates to a funding gap of \$180 million. Consistent and ongoing funding is crucial to building a strong statewide foundation for our public health system. We know the capacity of our local health departments vary throughout the state and we look forward to working with you to continue strengthening the public health system. (*Article 14, Section 3 (k) and Article 3, Section 129 & 130*)

- **Public Health Emergency Preparedness Response**

Responding to disasters and emergencies—whether health focused or not—is a core responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments. Thank you for the investment of \$8.4 million per year in local and tribal public health emergency preparedness and response. This funding will be crucial to rebuild the capacity of Minnesota's local health departments and will be key in ensuring strong future response to emergencies. Our system does best when all parts are functioning at the most optimal level. (*Article 14, Section 3(f)*)

- **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 \$500,000 in funding to support the Public Health AmeriCorps program, which has proven to be a valuable tool in building public health capacity and recruiting a new, diverse, governmental public health workforce. (*Article 14, Section 3 (k)*)

- **Supporting Children and Families**

We appreciate the inclusion of numerous provisions that support the healthy development of children and families. Prenatal to age three are particularly crucial years for a child's development, with 85% of a child's brain growth occurring during that time. Focusing

resources on our youngest Minnesotans set them on a path for a stable and healthy future. The following provisions are critical in improving the health of children and families:

- *Family Home Visiting* – Prevention-focused family home visiting services will ensure Minnesota children get a healthy start. Thank you for the inclusion of \$5 million per biennium to increase access to these services for Minnesotans. We encourage legislators to align investments in family home visiting with the Governor's budget proposal, further expanding access to these services for families and babies. (*Article 14, Section 3(o)*)
- *Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program* – This proposal will address child development in children of color and American Indian children to ensure healthy development from prenatal to grade three. (*Article 14, Section 3(d) and Article 3, Section 125*)

- **Additional Provisions that Support Community Health**

LPHA and AMC support the inclusion of various prevention-related provisions in the bill including those that prevent drug overdose and substance misuse; create MDH offices focused on American Indian and African American health; address long COVID; fund family planning special project grants; provide Medical Assistance coverage for tobacco and nicotine cessation; add a local public health seat to the Rural Health Advisory Council; expand access to dental health services; focus on HIV prevention; and, provide grants to expand school-based health clinics. We also hope that you will consider long term funding to support the MN Uninsured and Underinsured Adult Vaccine (UUAV) Program to ensure all Minnesotans have access to vaccination that prevent the spread of disease.

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 stable and reliable funding. Thank you for your continued support of these critical sources of public health funding and other programs that will improve the health of our state. We look forward to continuing to work with you as this bill moves forward to advance prevention strategies that promote the public's health.

Sincerely,



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