



Protecting, Maintaining and Improving the Health of All Minnesotans

April 14, 2023

Senator John Marty
Chair, Senate Finance
3235 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services
2107 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty and Chair Wiklund,

I am writing to you today to express my appreciation for the inclusion of so many sustained investments for improving public health in SF2995, the Department of Health provisions modification and appropriation bill. As the last few years have taught us, public health has never been more critical, but you cannot wait for a pandemic or other emergency to make investments. We also know that prevention saves money, prevention saves time, and most importantly, prevention saves lives. I greatly appreciate your efforts and want to highlight MDH priorities included in this bill.

Investing in Public Health

Thank you for this bill's sustained investments in public health infrastructure and emergency preparedness. As you know, public health historically has been underfunded and ends up being stuck in a cycle of panic and neglect. We appreciate the legislature's investments to create a public health system that works for everyone, everywhere. This includes new investments for local and tribal public health around the state, as well as new investments to maintain a strong foundation for emergency response.

While the importance of public health has never been clearer, the importance of investing in prevention cannot be overstated. We spend 80% of our health care dollars treating chronic diseases—these are diseases that can and should be prevented. If we want to address the growing burden that health care is placing on our state budget, we should be doing what we can to keep people healthier and for longer. This includes doing what we can today to address the health impacts of climate change as well, and I am very happy to see funding for climate resiliency in the bill.

Investing in Equity

We are all troubled by the “Minnesota paradox.” That is, we are one of the healthiest states to live in for White Minnesotans, but we also have some of the worse disparities for Indigenous Minnesotans, Black Minnesotans, and other Minnesotans of color.

Thank you for new tools that will help us address some of these troubling disparities, including the statutory establishment of the Health Equity Advisory and Leadership Council and for the Equitable Care Taskforce which I know will help our state advance bolder solutions to health disparities. Thank you as well for the new funding to continue the work of our Office of American Indian Health and the establishment of a new Office of African American Health.

Community Grants

We can only be successful with strong partners to help us deliver public health strategies to improve people’s lives, their families, and their communities. Important and successful grant programs like Community Solutions, 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, the programs to revitalize the healthcare workforce, Healthy Beginnings, community health workers, are just a few of the grant programs that support our key partners to deliver important services to Minnesotans.

Agency Operating Adjustment

Finally, I appreciate the inclusion of the operating adjustment for the Department to help us maintain our current service levels. This funding represents support of the talented and dedicated people we have, investments in technology, and to continue the oversight that we want for fiscal stewardship.

Thank you to Chair Wiklund for your efforts in creating this bill, and thanks to both of you for your investment in prevention and in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brooke A. Cunningham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Brooke Cunningham, MD, PhD
Commissioner

Cc: Senator Eric Pratt, Senator Paul Utke, Senator Kari Dziedzic, Senator Mark Johnson