



COUNTY OF STEARNS

County Administration

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March 22, 2023

RE: SF 2995, Public Health System Transformation

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee;

Thank you for the inclusion of \$15 million per year in funding to support public health transformation in SF 2995. This investment is crucial for building capacity of local health departments to fulfill foundational public health responsibilities.

I serve as chair of the State Community Health Services Advisory Committee (SCHSAC), a member of the state's 21st Century Public Health Joint Leadership Team, and as the immediate past chair for the Association of Minnesota's Counties (AMC) Public Health and Human Services Committee. I'm also a County Commissioner in Stearns County.

SCHSAC, local public health, and the Minnesota Department of Health recently partnered to publish a legislative report with the preliminary results from an assessment of the capacity of Minnesota's public health system. This assessment revealed that the capacity of public health departments varies significantly across the state of Minnesota. As you move forward to drafting omnibus bills this session, I hope you will consider expanding this investment to \$45 million per year, to address the significant health needs of our communities. All Minnesota residents, regardless of where they live, should have access to a baseline set of public health services in their communities to ensure equitable health outcomes.

Minnesota's public health system was set up in 1976 and is now strained to keep up with rapidly changing technology, economic, social, and health needs of our communities. Now is the time to reinvest in our public health system. The investment included in SF 2995, focused on foundational responsibilities, will build much needed capacity in local health departments.

More specifically, increased foundational support funds will allow health departments to address health inequities, assess and understand where health threats will impact communities, prepare for and respond to emergencies like COVID-19 or natural disasters, ensure babies and their parents get a healthy start, and prevent and control infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis or Measles. It will ensure we have a strong base of public health knowledge, staff, and capacity that can be leveraged to protect and promote health as needs arise.

Every corner of the state deserves to have access to a strong local public health department. Thank you for your support of this important policy.

Sincerely,

Tarryl L. Clark
Chair, State Community Health Services Advisory Committee
Vice-Chair, Stearns County Board of Commissioners