



Association of Minnesota Counties

March 22, 2023

RE: SF 2995

Chair Wiklund 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. LPHA and AMC would like to highlight several items in SF 2995 that would help local public health departments best serve their communities:

- **Public Health System Transformation**

We appreciate the inclusion of funds for local and tribal health departments to fulfill foundational public health responsibilities. Specifically, the bill directs \$15 million to support local public health and \$750,000 for tribal public health foundational responsibilities. The capacity of Minnesota's local health departments varies widely across the state. Foundational responsibilities need to be in place in each health department, so they are always ready to serve their community and achieve equitable health outcomes. However, we know the need is significant and hope you will consider additional investment, at a total of \$45 million per year, to strengthen and build an equitable system that serves all Minnesotans. Thank you for considering this investment which will help transform and improve our system. (*Article 1, Section 2 (f) and Article 2, Section 77 & 78*)

- **Public Health Emergency Preparedness Response**

Thank you for the investment in public health emergency preparedness and response. We appreciate the inclusion of funds to sustain the strategic stockpile warehouse, transition the COVID-19 response, and increase emergency response capabilities at the state, local, and tribal levels. The inclusion of \$8.4 million investment in local and tribal public health emergency response will be key in stabilizing our system and ensuring strong future response. Responding to disasters and emergencies—whether health focused or not—is a core responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments. 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 emergency preparedness funds and a series of funding cuts have compromised local public health's ability to respond to emergencies. (*Article 1, Section 2(f)*)

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

We appreciate the inclusion of provisions that address workforce challenges in local public health. Since 2008 local health departments across the United States have lost more than 20% of their workforce, more than 50,000 jobs. A significant investment in the public health workforce is needed to ensure we can continue to provide crucial public health services into the future. Thank you for inclusion of the following provisions:

- *Public Health AmeriCorps Program* – The investment of \$500,000 to support Minnesota's Public Health AmeriCorps program will be a valuable tool to aide in recruiting a new and diverse governmental public health workforce. (*Article 1, Section 2 (f)(3)*)

- *Community Health Workers* – Community health workers play a critical role in local health departments. Thank you for the investment of funds to further develop and expand their role. (*Article 1, Section 2 (g) and Article 1, Section 50*)
- **Supporting Children and Families**
We appreciate the inclusion of numerous provisions that support healthy children and families. The path to a healthy, prosperous, and equitable society is largely determined in the first three years of a child's life with 85% of a child's brain growth occurring before age three. Children who meet physical and cognitive development benchmarks during the first three years are more likely to be prepared for school, have stronger relationships, and ultimately have healthier, more stable, and prosperous lives. The following provisions will be 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. (*Article 1, Section 2(o)*)
 - *Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grant Program* – This proposal will address critical child development in children of color and American Indian children to ensure healthy development from prenatal to grade three. (*Article 1, Section 2(i) and Article 2, Section 71*)
 - *Healthy Beginnings, Healthy Families Act* – This program will address disparities in our youngest residents and their families, ensuring they are ready for school. (*Article 1, Section 2(m) and Article 2, Section 74*)
- **Additional Provisions that Support Community Health**
LPHA and AMC support the inclusion of various prevention-related provisions in the bill including those that reduce exposure to lead and ensure safe access to drinking water in homes and school settings; promote adolescent and community mental well-being; fund preparation for extreme weather events; prevent drug overdose and substance misuse; address the impacts of long COVID; support the MN Uninsured and Underinsured Adult Vaccine (UUAV) Program; reduce health disparities among those with disabilities; and, strengthen the role of school health.

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 to advance prevention strategies that promote the public's health.

Sincerely,



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