



# Association of Minnesota Counties

March 31, 2023

**RE: SF 2995 – DE Amendment**

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee:

The Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA) and the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) appreciate 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 and Human Services 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 includes \$22,600,000 per biennium to support Minnesota's public health system. While it is challenging to estimate the cost needed to fully fund the 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. We hope you will consider expanding investments in public health system transformation to meet the great needs across the state. 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 and rebuilding that capacity into the future.

- **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 in our statewide public health system, including \$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 in ensuring strong future response to emergencies. Our system does best when all parts are functioning at the most optimal level.

- **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 and for expanding 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.

- **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.

Thank you for the inclusion of \$20 million per biennium to increase access to prevention-focused family home visiting services. This will ensure Minnesota children get a healthy start.

- **Additional Provisions that Support Community Health**

LPHA and AMC support the inclusion of various prevention-related provisions in the bill including those that create MDH offices focused on American Indian and African American health; dedicate potential JUUL lawsuit funds to youth commercial tobacco prevention activities; fund planning for and addressing extreme weather events; fund family planning special project grants; address lead exposure in school and childcare settings; reinstate fetal and infant mortality case review; address long COVID; focus on HIV prevention; and, provide grants to expand school-based health clinics. We also hope that you will consider funding to support the MN Uninsured and Underinsured Adult Vaccine (UUAV) Program to ensure all Minnesotans have access to vaccinations that prevent the spread of disease. Further, we hope you will consider mirroring the Governor's budget proposal for peer led adolescent mental health promotion to equip community members to deliver mental health support and programming.

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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