



Madam Chair Julie Rosen
Minnesota Senate Finance Committee

March 3, 2020

RE: Local Response to COVID-19

Madam Chair Rosen,

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA), we are writing to express support for legislative proposals that provide critical funding for local preparedness and response to COVID-19. Planning for and responding to disasters and emergencies is a core responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments and local agencies serve as the boots on the ground in the event of a public health emergency.

In Minnesota, federal Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) funding flows first to the Minnesota Department of Health and is then passed through to local agencies. Since the program began in 2002, Minnesota's PHEP funding has been cut drastically from nearly \$16 million in 2002 to \$9.2 million in 2019. While there is hope for future federal funding, it should be clear that at present there is no state-level funding to support local preparedness efforts. **The absence of state funding greatly compromises local public health's ability to respond to emergency events, such as the infectious disease outbreak COVID-19.**

Local public health agencies across the state have already begun work to respond to the current COVID-19 outbreak, dedicating significant staff time and resources to preparation and communication. Every day, local agencies are implementing many activities to respond to this public health crisis including coordinating with health care providers in their communities, inventorying supplies, updating policies, and working closely with the Minnesota Department of Health.

While these proactive efforts are coordination and preparedness-focused, future public health efforts will necessitate the purchase of personal protective equipment and materials to make sure response efforts are not compromised by potential depletion in the case of a long-term response. Additionally, local communities will be responsible for the costs of providing housing to those who need to be quarantined outside of their homes. Local public health agencies also have the obligation to provide those quarantined with services such as home food or prescription drug delivery. Furthermore, once a vaccine becomes available, local public health will be responsible for vaccination campaigns, vaccination delivery, and purchase of associated supplies.

Providing immediate and ongoing emergency response and preparedness funding is critical to effectively respond to COVID-19 and other public health emergencies. Moreover, we ask that as the state takes funding a response to this public health crisis seriously, they also make sure the mechanisms to direct

funding to local, on-the-ground efforts are efficient and not administratively burdensome so as to prioritize timely and critical work. We look forward to continued partnership on this issue to ensure are communities are safe and healthy.

Sincerely,



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