

May 16, 2020

Majority Leader Paul Gazelka
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg, Room 3113
St. Paul, MN 55155



RE: Funding for Local Public Health COVID-19 Response

Dear Majority Leader Gazelka,

On behalf of the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA) and our more than 235 members representing city, county and tribal public health departments across the state, I am writing to express the need for critical funding for local response to COVID-19. Planning for and responding to disasters and emergencies is a statutorily mandated responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments and local agencies are serving as the boots on the ground in responding to COVID-19.

As local public health across the state continues to ramp up their services in response to the growing numbers of COVID-19 cases in our state, further investment is needed to continue efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the most vulnerable in our communities. Local agencies are witnessing an array of costs associated with the pandemic and expect these costs to increase significantly in time as the full impacts of the pandemic are realized.

With an ongoing increase in cases, the need for essential service delivery will grow rapidly. These services include food and prescription delivery to those in quarantine, housing for those experiencing homelessness or who are unable to stay in their homes, and transportation to safe locations and critical appointments. These services enable people to stay safe in their homes and prevent spread of the virus.

Further, local health departments are leading in their communities on education in preventing the spread of the disease. They are closely coordinating with local media, community organizations and business including long-term care facilities and local health care organizations. They are working to support the mental well-being of members of their communities, supporting distribution of Personal Protective Equipment, and leading in their local incident command structures. Local agencies have also stepped in to play an active role in contact tracing to prevent the spread of the virus.

Providing these community-based resources takes significant staff time and investment. Local public health agencies have incurred large costs in responding to COVID-19 and it is important for robust and flexible funding to go to local agencies so they can meet the needs of their communities. As the legislative session comes to a close, we ask that the state prioritizes and directs funding to local, on-the-ground efforts.

We look forward to continued partnership on this issue to ensure our communities are safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Kari Oldfield, Executive Director
Local Public Health Association of MN