

# 2019 LPHA Legislative Priorities



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Dodge and Steele Counties & 2019 LPHA Chair

As we embark on a new year, Local Public Health Association (LPHA) members look forward to working with the legislature to promote and protect the health of Minnesota residents.

This session, we will be working on the following Legislative priorities:

**Local Public Health Grant:** The Local Public Health Grant is the state's main investment in core services mandated to local public health by state statute. It provides flexible funding to local governments, so they can direct dollars to address needs in their communities. An over-reliance on local tax levies and unstable and unpredictable grant funding has stressed the local public health system, limiting capacity to carry out core services and respond to emerging public health issues like mental health, opioid and substance abuse, and infectious disease threats. LPHA supports a significant, statewide increase in funding for the Local Public Health Grant in FY20-21.

**Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP):** SHIP strives to reduce health care costs and chronic disease rates by creating more opportunities for Minnesotans of all ages to eat healthy, be active and live tobacco-free. It also allows communities to serve the elderly by helping to prevent dementia and falls. The Minnesota Legislature allocated nearly \$35 million to SHIP for the 2018-2019 biennium, with funding supporting grants to local community partners in all 87 counties and 10 tribal nations. LPHA supports maintaining stable, statewide funding for SHIP at \$35 million per biennium to help all Minnesotans live healthier, longer lives and continue to drive down state health care costs.

**Telehealth for Infectious Disease Investigation, Prevention & Treatment:** Local public health is mandated by state statute to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. For diseases like tuberculosis (TB), this may require directly observed therapy (DOT), whereby

a public health nurse or registered nurse observes a client ingesting daily medication, often for 6 months or more. The staff time and travel-related expenses associated with this type of treatment come at a significant cost. Local Public Health is responding to this challenge by pursuing telemedicine for DOT. However, this innovation and its benefits are currently restricted by statutory language limiting Medical Assistance (MA) coverage to three telemedicine services per enrollee per week. LPHA supports revisions to the MN Telemedicine Act that allow local public health providers to bill MA more than three times per week per enrollee for telemedicine services conducted for the purposes of infectious disease investigation, prevention and treatment.

**Health Care Access Fund & Provider Tax:** The Health Care Access Fund was established to increase access to health care, contain health care costs, and improve the quality of health care services for Minnesotans. The fund supports MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance, quality improvement initiatives, and public health prevention strategies through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership. The provider tax is the largest source of revenue to the HCAF but is scheduled to sunset in December 2019. Allowing the provider tax to expire would jeopardize access to health care for thousands of Minnesotans and threaten prevention programs needed to curb rising health care costs. LPHA supports maintaining the provider tax as the funding source for the Health Care Access Fund.

**Opioid, Substance and Tobacco Prevention:** The complexity of the opioid epidemic and other substance abuse requires a collaborative response that works along a continuum of care --from public health prevention to treatment--if current trends are to change. Tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Minnesota. Upstream policies that aim to prevent the abuse of opioids, other substances and tobacco from occurring include youth prevention, public awareness, provider education, and safe disposal of prescription drugs. LPHA supports policies and new funding that address opioid, substance and tobacco use through public health prevention.

We are thankful for the expertise and commitment of our members and the ongoing support from AMC and other affiliates organizations. We look forward to working together to make 2019 a healthy and productive year! ■

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