



Illinois Public Health Association

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February 23, 2024

Sameer Vohra, MD, JD
Director
Illinois Department of Public Health
535 W. Jefferson Street
Springfield, Illinois 62761-0001

Dear Director Vohra:

As a statewide association that advocates for improving and protecting the health of all residents of Illinois, the Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA) is disappointed in the Governor's SFY2025 introduced budget, which reduces by \$5 million the Illinois Department of Public Health's (IDPH) Local Health Protection Fund Grants (LHPG). The LHPG appropriation increase, passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor for SFY2024, was the first significant funding change for the state's 97 certified local health departments (LHDs) in almost two decades and was critical to help them continue to fulfill their statutory requirements as delegate agencies of IDPH. Additionally, the Governor's budget does not include provisions to fund the statutorily mandated Office of Men's Health.

The Governor's budget projects more than one billion dollars in new revenue for SFY2025. While the Governor's proposed funding initiatives such as new programs targeting the prevention of homelessness, crisis response, migrant funding, and supporting IT replacement for the Department's disease surveillance system are laudable expenditures, it is important to remember that LHDs are on the front lines every day ensuring the health of the public, especially to address the health needs of Illinois' most vulnerable populations. Substantial funding has been earmarked to fund welcoming centers for migrant populations but as these populations disperse throughout the state, this will no doubt impact many Illinois public health departments who will need to provide additional services to migrant families. The Governor's introduced budget proposes allocation for early childhood interventions, but none of that funding is coming to local public health to rebuild the immunization system in our counties. Early childhood programs such as immunization, WIC and well-baby visits, dental, and other social services often start at local public health offices.

Illinois' LHDs are on the front lines fulfilling their mandates to protect the public by ensuring safe water, disease control and prevention, safe food, and acting as agents of the State of Illinois for the protection of our communities. The \$5 million in new LHPG funding appropriated for SFY2024 was a turning point and helped address some of the unprecedented demands on the public health system as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The new monies led to new minimum funding levels, which allowed LHDs to replace critical staff who retired or

left the public health sector and restart programs to accomplish statutory requirements. The Governor's SFY2025 budget reduction endangers the ability of LHDs to maintain these staff and continue to effectively implement the programs which ensure health protection in our counties.

IPHA is committed to championing optimal, equitable health and well-being for all. Ensuring adequate funding for certified local health departments to support their workforce and ensure they are able to accomplish their mandates is critical to the health of our communities. My goal this spring will be to work with the public health associations and members of the General Assembly to continue the state's investment in local public health systems by restoring the \$5 million reduction in the LHPG funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom K. Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Hughes
Executive Director

Cc: Allison Nickrent, Legislative Director, Illinois Department of Public Health