



Illinois Public Health Association

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February 1, 2024

Governor JB Pritzker
207 Statehouse
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

Illinois' 97 certified local health departments (LHDs) have been on the frontlines since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. LHDs are delegate agencies of the state health department and are critical to keeping our communities safe and healthy. Today, LHDs are facing hostile county boards due to their enforcement of the administration's executive orders; face chronic underfunding of programs mandated by the state; operate in facilities which desperately need capital funding for repairs and improvements; and are dealing with severe shortages of qualified public health workers and leaders. Each of these factors contributes to a deteriorating public health system and leaves Illinois' communities and residents vulnerable to future public health crises.

I am writing to urge you to maintain the Local Health Protection Grant (LHPG) at its current rate of \$24M in the FY 2025 budget proposal. The purpose of the LHPG is to make sure that all health departments have the means necessary to develop and sustain their services. On top of struggling financially, these LHDs are stretched extremely thin in their ability to provide services to local communities. One LHD in Southern Illinois, the Southern 7 Health Department, serves seven counties covering an area slightly larger than the state of Delaware. The counties it serves are some of the poorest in the state. Alexander County, one of the seven, has a median household income of \$35,198. Many residents, families, and businesses in regions like these rely on their LHD for access to critical health services much more than in more populated and wealthier areas of our state.

As an Association dedicated to public health, we appreciate your leadership and all the work you have done as Governor throughout the pandemic. However, LHDs simply cannot continue to operate or expand their critical services under the dire financial circumstances that would be caused by a reduction in funding of the LHPG. **We strongly urge you and your administration to maintain the LHPG funding at its current or a higher level to ensure that the LHDs can continue their mission of protecting the public's health and safety and serving as the state's delegate authority at the community level.**

I am available to you at any time and thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Tom Hughes
Executive Director
Illinois Public Health Association