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Testimony SB 2004  
March 15, 2021

Representative Nelson and members of the House Appropriations, Human Resources Subcommittee, I urge you to fully fund the North Dakota Department of Health's budget to ensure that the department can carry out its mission to, "Improve the length and quality of life for all North Dakotans." Public health benefits all North Dakotans.

Investment in public health saves lives and money. As a state and nation, we spend a great deal on healthcare: treatment for people once they have become ill. It has been estimated that of the \$3 trillion in health spending in the U.S., public health receives only three percent of that figure<sup>i</sup> Public health can be credited with adding 25 years of life expectancy in the 20th century, but in the past year, we all lost a full year of life expectancy.

Let's not take for granted public health's contributions to our longer and less painful lives: helping track and address the causes of disease, scientific research, the development and administration of vaccines, clean water, and ensuring the most very basic treatment of human waste to reduce the spread of diseases. There is now the potential to reach the people who experience the largest inequities in health, to get people access to the very conditions that enable many of us to experience good health.

Let's make sure we are ready to plan for and respond to future outbreaks by funding public health. We need to build in preparedness, readiness, resilience, and trained staff. Unlike the business of selling goods, public health does not work on "just in time" order and delivery systems. As a state we cannot be prepared if there are continued cuts to the department's budget and to local public health units every biennium.

In this year when we have lost more than 1400 North Dakota lives in a global pandemic, please understand the necessity of public health and show your support for the lives of North Dakotans by investing in it and in the lives of all of us.

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<sup>i</sup> *Health Affairs*, August 2017, "Funding For Local Public Health: A Renewed Path For Critical Infrastructure" accessed at:  
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20170822.061624/full/>