

**Testimony**  
**House Bill 1012**  
**House Appropriations—Human Resource Division**  
**January 27, 2025**  
**Southwestern District Health Unit**

Good morning, Chairman Nelson and members of the Committee. My name is Sherry Adams and I am the Executive Officer for Southwestern District Health Unit (SWDHU). My health unit covers the eight counties of the Southwest which includes Adams, Billings, Golden Valley, Bowman, Slope, Dunn, Hettinger and Stark. I am writing to increase Local Public Health State Aid by two million dollars, which would bring the eight million dollars in the Governor's Budget to ten million dollars. We had submitted the ten-million-dollar request through the HHS budget process, but it was not brought over within the Governor's budget.

Local and state governmental public health agencies are recognized nationally as having the primary responsibility for promoting and protecting the public's health. We are the "boots on the ground" and serve as the foundation to the local public health system in a public health emergency. Local Public Health units work with numerous community partners to address community needs. Our local community health needs continue to grow and have become more complex, and increases in state aid funding is needed to ensure we are able to continue to support those needs. State aid is one of the few flexible streams of funding that local public health unit have and fills gaps not covered by other funding sources. (See attached Handouts)

Southwestern District Health Unit relies on State Aid Funding for a multitude of services. Some of those specific to our health unit are for Suicide Screening and referral, supplemental funds for communicable disease response (such as TB), environmental health services to outlying counties etc. Every Health Unit is able to use the funds for whatever gaps in their community that they have.

Local Public Health continues to struggle to fill vacant positions, primarily as we can not compete with private industry or sign-on bonuses. Much of our workforce has retired or will retire and we no longer see the longevity of new hires.

Another concern that is the uncertainty of future federal grants, whether or not we can get any increases of mill levy with property tax reform, and increased demands on local public health without additional funding.

Local Public Health is very passionate to be able to help meet the needs of our communities, but unfortunately without additional increases somewhere---like State Aid, we will either have to look at decreasing staff and or programs or both.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.