

**Testimony on House Bill 2248
Social Service Budget Committee
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Kansas Department of Health and Environment
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Chairperson Carpenter and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment appreciates the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 2248, which would increase state financial assistance to local health departments (LHDs) under specified circumstances.

HB 2248 would amend the funding formula for public health departments and increase the minimum each local health department receives. Sixty-seven (67) LHDs only receive the minimum of \$7,000 and have received this amount annually since 1992. These are the only discretionary funds they receive regularly. This funding formula is antiquated and needs to be updated in order for LHDs to provide essential services to their populations.

Currently Kansas ranks 40th in the US for public health funding at \$60 per person. This is 4.5 times less than the top state of Alaska, which funds public health at a cost of \$281 per person. The effects of a lack of investment in local public health have been realized throughout the pandemic with some of the LHDs lacking the capacity to conduct effective case investigations and contact tracing as well as lacking the capacity and expertise to isolate and quarantine to reduce the spread of COVID. We need to address issues now by building and improving the infrastructure in order to be prepared for future public health issues. Investing in public health is essential for COVID-19 recovery efforts. Otherwise, we are putting the health and safety of our communities at risk.

Although local health departments have been the backbone of the pandemic response in the state, the essential services local health departments provide in their communities stretch far beyond the COVID response. Examples include ensuring child care settings are safe, providing prenatal education and collaborating with organizations in their communities to address behavioral health issues. Local health departments are indispensable institutions in their communities that help keep Kansans healthy and safe.