

**Wisconsin Public Health Association Resolution:**

**Supporting the use of Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to guide policymaking<sup>1</sup>**

*Note: This resolution has been adapted from a similar resolution proposed by the Minnesota Public Health Association.*

**WHEREAS**, many of the policies and decisions made by local, county, state, and federal government influence health directly or indirectly; and

**WHEREAS**, many social, economic and environmental policy decisions impacting health and well-being are made outside of the public health and health care sectors; and

**WHEREAS**, environmental impact assessments are well-established as a tool used to guide policy decisions, but have not included a systematic process to assess health<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, a comprehensive approach to assess the health impacts of policy proposals is needed; and

**WHEREAS**, a health impact assessment (HIA) is a tool that helps policy makers and the public understand how a proposed project, program, plan, or policy could affect the health of the people in a community<sup>3</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, HIAs view health holistically, also including the broader social, economic, and environmental influences that occur upstream; and

**WHEREAS**, the information provided by an HIA assists policy makers to weigh the pros and cons of their decisions and puts in place practical strategies that minimize or mitigate adverse health effects and maximize potential health benefits<sup>4</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, HIAs incorporate a number of qualitative and quantitative methods to identify the health effects of public policy decisions and provide opportunities for community residents, public health professionals, and other stakeholders to be involved<sup>5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, HIAs have been widely adopted by European nations, as well as Canada and Australia, and are emerging as a policy planning tool in the United States<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wisconsin State Health Plan (SHP) 2020 states that HIA's provide a "synergistic policy approach that aligns with most [other SHP 2020] plan objectives"<sup>10</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the Wisconsin State Health Plan 2020 calls for the creation of dedicated capacity in Wisconsin to perform a health impact assessment of proposed policy changes, and to compare and disseminate the effectiveness of alternative policies and practices (Pillar Objective 9);

and

**WHEREAS**, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (WDPH) was awarded funding in 2009 by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) to build capacity among state and local partners to implement HIAs by providing in-person and webinar trainings across the state, resources (including an HIA toolkit at <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hia/>), and technical assistance; and

**WHEREAS**, WPHA is one of six APHA affiliate members of the Great Lakes Coalition, which has selected HIAs as an area for strategic action in its 2010-2012.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Wisconsin Public Health Association:

1. Supports efforts to train public health professionals and other relevant sectors to conduct comprehensive health impact assessments on social, economic and environmental policies;
2. Encourages public health professionals to collaborate with community stakeholders, other key sectors and decision-makers to plan and implement health impact assessments;
3. Urges policymakers and decision-makers to include health perspectives – including HIAs – into decision-making processes, to ensure that policy and planning decisions promote, protect, and improve the health of communities;
4. Supports efforts to make HIAs routine in decision-making when appropriate, and urges policymakers to follow HIA recommendations.
5. Encourages the Wisconsin State Legislature to adopt legislation that encourages and funds the use of health impact assessments to guide community development and policy decisions at all levels of government (local, county, and state).

#### References

1. This resolution has been adapted from a similar resolution proposed at the Minnesota Public Health Association
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3. Farhang L. “Health Impact Assessment: A Tool to Consider Health in Decision-Making.” A presentation of the San Francisco Department of Public Health and Human Impact Partners. January 12, 2009.
4. Dannenberg AL et al. (2006). Growing the field of health impact assessment in the United States: An agenda for research and practice. *American Journal of Public Health*. 96(2):19-27.
5. Quigley, R; den Broeder, L; Furu, P; Bond, A; Cave, B; Bos, R. (2006). Health Impact Assessment. *International Best Practice Principles, Special Publication Series No. 5*. Fargo, ND: International Association of Impact Assessment.
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health impact assessment in the United States: 27 case studies, 1999–2007. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 34: 241-256.

7. EnHealth. (2001). *Health Impact Assessment Guidelines*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.

8. Health Canada. (2004). *Canadian Handbook on Health Impact Assessment, Vol 1. The Basics*. Ottawa: Health Canada.

9. Cole BL, Fielding JE. (2007). Health impact assessment: A tool to help policy makers understand health beyond health care. *Annual Review of Public Health*. 28:17.1-17.20.

10. Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Policy and Practice Alignment. *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone Living Better, Longer. A State Health Plan to Improve Health Across the Life Span, and Eliminate Health Disparities and Achieve Health Equity*. P-00187. July 2010.