

2019-2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Heading into the 2019-2020 legislative session, WPHA and WALHDAB decided that three overarching themes should be incorporated in all of our efforts:

1. Building and retaining public health infrastructure through public health funding.
2. Infusing health and equity in all policies.
3. Improving public health workforce succession planning to support consistent and efficient delivery of services.



Along with these overarching themes, WPHA and WALHDAB decided to detail specific priorities and will actively engage in policy next legislative session that will focus on four social determinants of health.

JUSTICE REFORM

- **Increase treatment alternatives and diversion program (TAD) funding for mental health and substance abuse issues.**
There has been bipartisan interest in this issue the past few sessions, particularly with the HOPE (Heroin, Opioid Prevention and Education) Agenda. Last session, there were several bills introduced (and some that became law) which provided funding for mental health and substance abuse.
- **Increase funding allocated to counties for juvenile justice services to fund all costs associated with bringing 17-year-old first time juvenile offenders back to the juvenile justice system.**
Juvenile justice reform has been identified as an important issue to several active members of WPHA and WALHDAB. Corrections, particularly involving juveniles, has been a bipartisan topic of discussion recently in Wisconsin politics.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- **Fully fund School Breakfast Program.**
State statute asks the state to fund school breakfast at 15 cents per each breakfast served. However, due to the popularity of the program, state funding only allows for an 8 cent reimbursement. We are seeking additional dollars to ensure the program is fully funded.

HOUSING

- **Expand low income housing tax credits for developers and rental assistance vouchers for renters.**
Near the end of last session, Wisconsin Act 176 earned bipartisan support and became law. The bill is just one example of a tax credit that helps encourage the development of low-income housing. WHEDA oversees many types of tax credits that support low-income housing developments, which focus on assisting developers as well as renters. Essentially, the tax credits lower construction and labor costs for developers and monthly rent for renters. With an aging population, low income senior housing tax credits are becoming more common in municipalities.
- **Funding for programs to eliminate / abate lead paint, soil and pipes, including but not limited to a statutory provision requiring that lead remediation dollars be used for that dedicated purpose.**
Lead abatement garnered significant bipartisan support last session, including Wisconsin Act 137, which provides financial assistance to replace lead service lines. There is also a dedicated fund in the DHS portion of the state budget meant to address lead poisoning lead exposure service. However, state statute does not explicitly limit the ability of the fund to be used for other purposes.

INCOME STABILITY & EMPLOYMENT

- **Supporting and expanding Paid Family Leave.**
Last session, there were bipartisan efforts to address paid family leave initiatives. Republican legislators explored opportunities to create paid family leave savings accounts. Democrats proposed ways for companies and municipalities to provide paid family leave. WPHA and WALHDAB support efforts to maintain financial stability for individuals on family leave.
- **Increase Earned Income Tax Credit and move from one-time to monthly payments.**
In the last state budget, Governor Walker increased funding for this program from \$30,100,000 in 2017-2018 to \$35,000,000 during the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Tax credits are a popular legislative idea and it is one that we believe will continue to be of bipartisan interest.
- **Establish tax credit for family caregivers.**
A new tax credit can potentially save health care associated costs because it will provide financial assistance to families who care for family members at home.
- **Increase workforce training/transitional jobs.**
This issue has drawn bipartisan support, and we believe, will continue to do so into the next session. Wisconsin has low unemployment. However, there is a major labor shortage in some sectors due to a lack of workers with the necessary and required skills to perform certain jobs in an evolving economy.

ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health is a broad science with a focused goal of protecting and improving the health of Wisconsin citizens. Over the last century, public health has dramatically increased life expectancy through such scientific advancements as vaccination, infectious disease control and chronic disease prevention. It has become increasingly clear that health outcomes are primarily driven by the social and economic conditions in which we live, work, play, pray, grow up, and grow old. That's why public health is increasing its emphasis on education, income and employment, housing, and other "social determinants of health."

Together, WPHA and WALHDAB represent over 1,200 public health professionals in communities across Wisconsin, striving to prevent, promote, and protect the citizens of the state.

About WPHA:

The Wisconsin Public Health Association is the largest statewide association of public health professionals in Wisconsin. Established in 1948, WPHA exists to improve, promote and protect health in Wisconsin. WPHA strives to be diverse in its constituency, rich in partnerships and valued for its policy recommendations and best practices. WPHA is the collective voice for public health in Wisconsin.

About WALHDAB:

The Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards is the statewide leader and voice for local governmental public health. WALHDAB was founded in 1991 to serve local health departments and boards of health.