



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

Resolution 2017-01
Public Health is Essential

WHEREAS, the public health system in Washington provides the foundation for the larger health care framework, working to prevent illness and disease while supporting the work of community partners; and

WHEREAS, tracking, responding to, and preventing costly food and water contamination and disease outbreaks is essential to protecting the public's health; and

WHEREAS, state and local public health officials, together with local leaders, have identified an agreed upon set of core public health services that should be available for every Washingtonian; and

WHEREAS, after a century of increasing life expectancies, today these gains are threatened by new and more complex diseases, continued tobacco use and preventable chronic diseases, putting today's children at risk of becoming the first generation to have shorter life expectancies than their parents; and

WHEREAS, the public's well-being is also threatened by public health's inability to meet its basic responsibility to provide these core services due to changes in its funding structure, complex and new diseases, and growing populations; and

WHEREAS, the motor vehicle excise tax was repealed in 2000, leaving the public health system without an adequate and sustainable funding source; and

WHEREAS, Washington state's population has grown by more than one million residents since 2000, and is expected to grow by another two million residents by 2025; and

WHEREAS, Washington state spends less on public health protection (\$38.08 per person) than other states like Idaho (\$54.35 per person) and Wyoming (\$89.75 per person); and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Board of Health has received testimony from numerous local health officials regarding high levels of communicable disease and outbreaks including Legionella, Hepatitis C, and foodborne illness which require a high degree of experienced staff and collaboration of partners to address these issues; and

WHEREAS, local health jurisdictions' capacity to rapidly respond to outbreaks and provide important disease prevention services is shrinking due to years of flat or under-funding for public health; and

WHEREAS, prevention efforts that help keep our citizens healthy: like chronic disease management, environmental protection, health education, emergency preparedness, monitoring and tracking diseases, tobacco prevention, and responding to the opioid epidemic are critical activities that the public health system is unable to perform without adequate funding; and

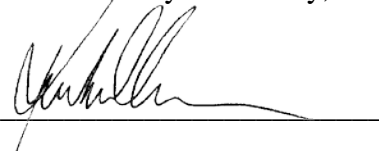
WHEREAS, over the last four years, state and local public health leaders have developed a plan to modernize the state's public health system, ensuring core services are available everywhere and designating others that can be effectively and efficiently shared between health departments; and

WHEREAS, without securing ongoing, stable, and dedicated funding for core public health services, our communities are left unprepared for emergencies like the SR 530 Slide, and vulnerable to the spread of communicable diseases like Zika and whooping cough; and

WHEREAS, rebuilding and refocusing our public health services means we can better monitor and coordinate emergency responses—keeping our families and communities safe, reducing costs for taxpayers, and protecting our local economy; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Washington State Board of Health calls on the Washington state legislature to recognize that public health is essential and provide the critical down payment to support core services in all communities and allow public health to rebuild its statewide system with added efficiency.

RESOLVED this 11th day of January, 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Grellner', is written over a horizontal line.

Keith Grellner, Chair