

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## MINNESOTA

# Federal Legislative Platform

## 2022

Hennepin County is the 33rd most populous county in the United States, and the largest in Minnesota. Within the county are 45 cities, including Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport. The county is also home to 12 Fortune 500 Companies including Target, UnitedHealth Group, and Best Buy. As a global hub of commerce and a national center for health care delivery and innovation, our relationship with the Federal Government has local, regional, and national significance. A thriving Hennepin County is important to the country.

## Policy priorities

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### COVID-19 response

Strengthen the federal-state-local intergovernmental partnership through direct investment in local public health, vaccinations, housing, economic recovery, and community stability

### Health and human services

Encourage innovation and recognize racism as a public health crisis in addressing complex health and human services problems, and recognize crises such as opioids through prevention. Maximize partnerships among federal, state, county, and private funders to support sustainable models of health and wellness

### Safety-net health services

Address racism as a public health crisis by ensuring access to meaningful and affordable health care and by protecting and promoting the financial vitality of safety-net systems, like Hennepin Healthcare System, in the context of federal reforms to publicly funded health care programs

### Housing

Leverage limited resources more efficiently and seek additional investments to advance stable housing for individuals and families and reduce disparities

# Direct funding priorities

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- **Blue Line extension (Bottineau LRT)** \$20 million under FTA Capital Investment Grants Program
- **County Roadway and Accessibility for B-Line and E-Line Bus Rapid Transit** \$11.6 million under FHWA Surface Transportation Program
- **Hennepin County Opioid Strategy Implementation** \$500,000 under COPS Meth
- **Emergency Shelter Program** \$750,000 under HUD’s Community Development Fund Program
- **Rebuild of East Lake Clinic** \$4.6 million under HRSA’s Health Center Program

## Platform

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### Elections

- Support federal funding for county elections operations, including election security, equipment, software, staffing, voter education and outreach, communications, and election materials translation
- Support a federally mandated and standardized early voting period
- Support the expansion of jurisdictions required to provide elections materials in multiple languages and modalities in order to improve understanding of elections, increase accessibility for voters who speak a language other than English, and improve voter participation

### Environmental protection and sustainability

**Support legislation and administrative policies consistent with the county’s Climate Action Plan that mitigate the impacts of climate change, protect and enhance natural environments, and promote sustainability in county operations**

- Support federal investment in community forestry by recognizing the role forests play in climate change mitigation and adaptation, and to address the impact of Emerald Ash Borer and other invasive species
- Support federal investment in technologies that address climate change and increase renewable energy production, including anaerobic digestion, biological carbon sequestration, wind, and renewable natural gas
- Support federal investment in long-range electric vehicle batteries, create a publicly available national infrastructure of quick charging stations, and electrify government fleets
- Support federal investment in solutions for food waste prevention and management

## Criminal justice

**Support criminal justice, mental health and sentencing reforms that reduce racial disparities, advance proven diversion strategies and facilitate offender re-entry**

- Reduce regulatory burdens (e.g., Institution of Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion, data sharing limitations) that compromise services for people experiencing mental illness before they become involved in the justice system
- Support continued federal investment in local re-entry programs and other initiatives critical to reducing adult and juvenile involvement in the justice system
- Encourage and reward state and local collaborations that reduce barriers to employment, housing, and behavioral health services, and support successful reintegration of justice-involved individuals into the community
- Provide federal support for evidence-based practices before, during and after initial contact with the juvenile and adult justice systems

## Health and human services

**Encourage innovation and recognize racism as a public health crisis in addressing complex health and human services problems. Maximize partnerships among federal, state, county, and private funders to support sustainable models of health and wellness**

- Support extension of current COVID-19 pandemic-related waiver authority for health and human services programs, including reimbursement for all telehealth modalities and continuous eligibility to promote coverage and increase access to healthcare
- Maximize state flexibility under Medicaid to encourage innovation in the delivery of care that improves overall population health and rewards efficiency
- Support child care and welfare reform initiatives that streamline and simplify access to services, encourage innovation at the local government level, and create pathways out of poverty
- Support interventions to address critical public health needs such as unsheltered

homelessness, emergency preparedness, HIV/infectious diseases, mental health, suicide prevention, maternal and child health, and pregnancy prevention

- Eliminate federal barriers to data sharing so that local governments can better support care coordination and efficient service delivery
- Support elimination of the Medicaid exclusion for pre-adjudicated persons under law enforcement supervision. Support state flexibility in the Medicaid program to cover justice-involved individuals regardless of the status of their charges or sentence
- Support resource allocation and policies that fully integrate medical and behavioral health services and provides patient-centered, culturally-competent care
- Adequately fund continued direct federal investment for protection of older adults to maximize partnerships among federal, state, and county agencies to build an effective and sustainable Adult Protective Services program
- Support expanding allowable services covered by Family First Preservations Services Act to include culturally responsive services

## Housing and community development

**Address the crisis in affordable housing through direct federal investment**

- Increase funding alignment and integration of federal housing programs such as Community Development Block Grant program, HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8), Emergency Shelter Grants and other programs that assist very low-income households, veterans, older adults, and persons with disabilities to afford accessible, dignified, decent, safe, and sanitary housing
- Expand shelter and supportive services to address the immediate needs of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- Support efforts to end homelessness for all residents

## Justice and equality

Ensure all residents receive equal protection under the law. Equip government to protect, defend, and enable everyone's ability to live freely and achieve their human potential

- Support comprehensive immigration reform that creates pathways to citizenship, addresses workforce development opportunities, provides access to health care and education, and supports fair and equitable interface with local public safety agencies. Oppose efforts to reduce or restrict access to the social safety net for immigrants, and eliminate barriers to refugee resettlement
- Support and adequately fund essential safeguards for the voting rights of all citizens, including no-excuse in-person and mail-in early voting, and automatic voter registration. Oppose efforts to restrict access to voting
- Support equal protection in law and federal regulations for all LGBTQI persons in housing, employment, health care/human services, education, and public accommodations
- Support federal efforts and funding for digital equity to ensure all residents have access to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband choices, computing devices, training, and internet-safety skills

## Safety-net health services

Address racism as a public health crisis by ensuring access to meaningful and affordable health care and promoting the financial vitality of safety-net systems, like Hennepin Healthcare System, in the context of federal reforms to publicly funded health care programs

- Protect critical funding streams and payments to safety-net providers, including the 340B Drug Pricing Program, Graduate Medical Education, Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program, and supplemental payments for Medicare and Medicaid
- Promote the financial vitality of safety-net systems by aligning federal reimbursement with the cost of care, by supporting adjustments to federal payment methodologies in both Medicaid and Medicare for safety-net providers that take into account social determinants of health, recognizing health systems that serve a large proportion of low-income seniors and people with disabilities
- Promote the health of our patients by protecting and expanding meaningful health insurance coverage, access to life-saving prescriptions, and investments in maternal and child health

## Taxes

**Support federal tax policies to leverage local investment in infrastructure, housing, and services**

- Support continued tax-free status of municipal bonds and private activity bonds. Restore local government authority to advance refund tax-exempt bonds (authority was eliminated in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017)
- Preserve and strengthen the Low-Income Housing, Federal Historic, and New Markets tax credit programs

## Transportation

**Sustain and strengthen the federal-state-county partnership that supports the nation's roads, bridges, transit, and rail systems. Ensure Minnesota's transportation infrastructure supports a 21st-century economy and vibrant, active communities**

- Increase infrastructure investment through new sources of revenue and support continued federal partnerships in projects such as the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program
- Support key investments:
  - Green Line extension (Southwest LRT)
  - Blue Line extension (Bottineau LRT)
- Support cash and innovative financing options in any comprehensive infrastructure package
- Support anti-displacement efforts to ensure current residents, small businesses, and cultural institutions are able to benefit from infrastructure and investment

## Workforce development

**Meet the future workforce needs of Hennepin County and other employers and address persistent disparities by connecting well-trained and qualified individuals to high-demand jobs in our region**

- Provide flexibility in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs to better support career pathways and career technical education for dislocated or under-skilled workers, youth and higher-barrier populations (e.g., recognition of employer- and industry-recognized credentialing for use of federal funds)
- Support regional sector-based partnerships providing career pathways to promote economic inclusion, address employment and income disparities, and meet industry hiring needs
- Support efforts to raise and protect wages for residents at the lowest income levels and industries most affected by the pandemic, including increasing the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, indexed to inflation

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