Agency Request Legislation — 2019

Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS)

HB 1497
SB 5732

Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) are services uniquely provided by government and on which the public depends for healthy and economically vital communities. In 2018, the Department of Health, State Board of Health, local health jurisdictions, Sovereign Tribal Nations and Indian health programs completed an assessment that produced an estimate of what the state would need to provide to fully fund foundational public health services as they are delivered today. That estimate is $450 million/biennium.

Governmental Public Health System

When looking at the gap for a subset of Foundational Public Health Services that includes critical work in communicable disease control, environmental public health, the cross-cutting capabilities that support them, and assessment, the estimate comes to $296 million/biennium. Examples of services potentially covered by these dollars include:

- Innovative approaches to service delivery like the Washington State Tuberculosis Collaborative Network and other models that make best use of limited public health resources and workforce.
- Keeping kids safe by working with providers to test more at-risk kids for lead exposure, and partnering with other state and local agencies to find and replace any fixtures leaching lead into school drinking water.
- Helping growing counties across the state keep up with communicable disease cases by streamlining disease investigations and improving follow-up times.

Foundational Public Health Services received an allocation of $22 million/biennium in the Governor’s budget for 2019-2021.

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Initial Investment

An initial one-time investment of $12 million was awarded in the 2017 Biennium Budget and allocated to the governmental public health system. Local health jurisdictions (LHJs) are using their $10 million allocation to fund three shared pilot service projects ($1 million) and reinforce their local needs in communicable disease investigation, surveillance, and control ($9 million). With the remaining $2 million, the Department of Health funded the FPHS assessment and is supporting data systems and infrastructure at the State Public Health Lab to strengthen communicable disease control activities. Also, the State Board of Health is completing additional Health Impact Reviews. A one-time investment of $3 million was also awarded to Public Health-Seattle and King County to do communicable disease work.

Transforming Over Time

Transforming and adequately resourcing Washington State’s governmental public health system will take continued investment over time. The 2019-2021 dollars will build on the initial one-time investment of $15 million/biennium, and it is recommended that dollars received in 2019-2021 are included in the base budget of the Department of Health, with additional funds added in subsequent biennia to address other areas of need (maternal and child health, chronic disease and injury prevention, access to care).