

March 9, 2018

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Congresswoman, Minnesota's 4th District
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congresswoman McCollum,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at today's meeting. We in county government, and the residents we serve, are impacted by budget decisions made at both the federal and state level. Many of the important programs and services administered by the county rely on federal and/or state funding. As you begin consideration of bills to fund the federal government, we ask that you keep these important programs in mind.

Transportation and Transit

Washington County has been working aggressively to upgrade at-grade intersections along Highway 36, and to advance the bus rapid transit line, known as the Gold Line, which would run from St. Paul's Union Depot into Woodbury.

In 2019, an interchange will be constructed at Hadley Avenue and Trunk Highway 36, planning has begun on an interchange at Manning Avenue in 2021, and discussions are starting with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) on the remaining at-grade intersections. A strong partnership between the local, state and federal governments will be needed to complete these projects. We are hopeful that a robust infrastructure package will allow us to make these needed improvements and maintain our current system.

We appreciate your strong leadership in Congress to ensure the Twin Cities region has a transit system that spurs economic investment and provides needed transportation links. The Gold Line project recently entered into the project development phase of the Capital Investment Grant program, which has a strong history of leveraging federal funding with local investment. Funding of the Capital Investment Grant program is important to transit projects like the Gold Line.

Public Health

Many of the programs delivered in our Public Health Department are funded through a combination of local, state and federal funding. The Prevention and Public Health Fund is a \$1 billion source of funding to prevent the leading causes of sickness and death. It was intended to be a permanent, dedicated federal account to augment public health support for states and local communities. Federal budget reductions have required funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund to be used to backfill cuts to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal agencies.

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In 2017, the state of Minnesota received \$17.4 million in funding from the Prevention and Health Fund. These funds support tracking of disease threats; childhood lead poisoning prevention; foodborne illness prevention; immunization programs; heart disease and stroke prevention; diabetes and tobacco prevention; and local public health training and assistance.

The county's 2018 budget includes approximately \$1.5 million in federal grants. Not all of this funding is from the Prevention and Public Health Fund, but the county would likely lose substantial funds if this program is eliminated at the federal level.

Community Services

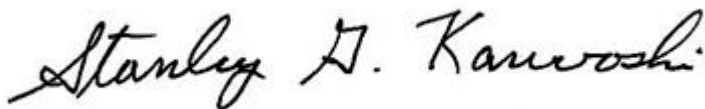
As the provider of safety net services at the local level, the county's Community Services Department relies on federal funding and is at the greatest risk of reductions if federal funding is decreased.

For example, if reductions are made to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), that would directly impact low-income and elderly individuals in the county. Cuts to the Medicaid program at the federal level, could likely funnel down and potentially lead to increased property taxes to fund services.

Additional cuts to Medicaid and marketplace subsidies would force states to contribute more of their own funds or scale back Medicaid eligibility, benefits, and provider payments. These additional burdens brought by both the state government and federal government could decrease the county's ability to adequately deliver services by continuing mandates without the proper share of funding by all levels of government. Additionally, the proposed broad waiver authority for states may undermine the federal protections put in place by Congress so that state redesign efforts do not eliminate critical safety net programs, and instead use some of this block grant funding for general government.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments on programs that would have the most impact on county operations and our delivery of services to the residents of Washington County. While the county board has not taken any formal positions related to the federal budget, our state legislative platform does call for adequate state and federal funding for the services that are mandated upon the county to delivery. Lacking this funding, additional pressure may be placed on the property tax as a source of funding these important programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stanley J. Karwoski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Stanley Karwoski
County Commissioner
District 2