RESOLUTION NO. 2026-33

A resolution to support sustainable state funding for local public health departments

WHEREAS, in Wisconsin, local health departments (LHDs) are legally required to provide a core set of public health services under Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 251 and Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter DHS 140; and

WHEREAS, responsibilities of LHDs have expanded significantly in recent years due to emerging public health threats, workforce shortages, and increasing community health needs; and

WHEREAS, LHDs rely significantly on a combination of limited state aids, categorical grants, and local property tax levy to fund these mandated services; and

WHEREAS, current state funding mechanisms for public health are largely outdated, not indexed to inflation, and do not reflect the true cost of delivering foundational public health services; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin currently ranks 49th lowest in state dollars dedicated to public health per person (https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/PH_funding); and

WHEREAS, Public health initiatives consistently deliver high returns on investment (ROI), with recent data showing a median ROI of 14.3 to 1, often saving $14 in medical and societal costs for every $1 spent (https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2025/07/08/public-health-initiatives-deliver-big-returns-on-investment); and

WHEREAS, reliance on short-term, restricted, or competitive grant funding creates instability and limits long-term planning; and

WHEREAS, counties bear a disproportionate share of the financial burden for providing foundational public health services, placing additional pressure on local property taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, a strong and adequately funded public health system is essential to protect the health, safety, and economic stability of Wisconsin residents and communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED *that the Sawyer County Board of Supervisors supports continuing to build and retain public health infrastructure through increased and flexible funding; and*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such a funding model should:

- Provide increased General Purpose Revenue (GPR) support for local health departments
- Include automatic inflationary adjustments
- Allow for flexible use of funds to meet local needs
- Reduce reliance on short-term, restricted, and/or competitive grants

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State of Wisconsin recognizes public health as a core governmental function and prioritizes sustained investment to ensure consistent service delivery across all jurisdictions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Sawyer County requests that the Wisconsin Counties Association advocates for policies that reduce the reliance on local property tax levy to fund foundational public health services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED *that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Governor of Wisconsin, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and all Wisconsin counties.*

Recommended for adoption by the Sawyer County Board of Supervisors at its meeting on August 20, 2026, by this Sawyer County Health and Human Services Board on August 6, 2026.

Kay Wilson, Chair

Chuck Van Etten, Vice Chair

Jeff Hoehne, Member

John Minto, Member

Jim Miller, Member

Sabrina Dunlap, MD, Community Member

Pam Mueller, Community Member

Lorraine Gouge, Tribal Governing Board Representative

Vacant

This Resolution is hereby adopted by Sawyer County Board of Supervisors this 20th day of August, 2026.

Ron Kinsley, Board Chair

Liz Klein, County Clerk