



November 1, 2018

Honorable Milwaukee Common Council Members:

On behalf of American Lung Association, thank you for your thoughtful consideration of budget priorities. During this important planning process, we request you to prioritize an increase in the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) budget.

We want to see investment at all levels of government to address pressing public health issues. We work with local health department leaders from all over Wisconsin, addressing issues like tobacco control, the flu, asthma, and other lung disease prevention.

We applaud Milwaukee's early adopter status in hitting tobacco out of Miller Park, increasing fines for selling tobacco products to minors, and addressing e-cigarettes and vaping in their smoke-free workplaces ordinance. These steps show your dedication to protecting public health.

Unfortunately, recently published tobacco control research from UWM's Zilber School of Public Health shows:

- More tobacco products displayed near candy, within three feet of the floor, and displayed with a price promotion in Latino and African American zip codes that in white zip codes.
- More prevalent menthol marketing and promotion in African American areas.

Milwaukee County experiences the highest asthma-induced hospitalization rate and emergency department visit rate of all Wisconsin counties, too. Particularly alarming, data regarding asthma-induced hospitalizations show that the rate in Milwaukee County drastically exceeds all other Wisconsin counties (Milwaukee at 10.0, Racine at 7.1, Juneau at 6.8, and Kenosha at 6.7) and the statewide average (4.6 per 10,000).

We at American Lung Association are so excited to see Dr. Jeanette Kowalik chosen to lead the City of Milwaukee Health Department. Many of us worked with her when she served as a tobacco control coordinator many years ago. Under Dr. Kowalik's competent and optimistic leadership, we have high hopes for MHD's ability to improve health outcomes for Milwaukee's citizens, particularly with adequate staffing and fiscal resources.

It's necessary to restore some of the 89 positions that have been cut over the past 14 years. We acknowledge a reality of tightening state support resulted in austerity measures for all city departments. However, it's time to reverse this trend. Please invest in MHD to help Dr. Kowalik succeed.

Thank you for your considering prioritizing this important department in your budget proposal.

Sincerely,

Dona Wininsky
Dona Wininsky
Director, Advocacy, Grassroots and Patient Engagement
American Lung Association in Wisconsin