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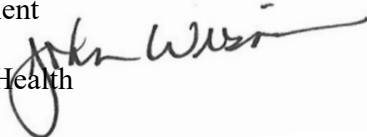
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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September 14, 2020

TO: David Schumacher, Director
Office of Financial Management

FROM: John Wiesman, Secretary of Health 

SUBJECT: Department of Health 2021-23 Biennium Operating Budget Submittal

I respectfully submit our department's 2021-23 biennium operating budget requests for Governor Inslee's consideration.

Our top budget recommendations focus on our state's struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic. Since January of this year—when the first confirmed case in the U.S. occurred within our own state—COVID-19 tested the resilience of our public health system. The crisis demonstrated the tremendous value local, tribal and state public health organizations deliver to keep our communities informed, safe and healthy but it also exposed how underfunded the overall governmental public health system is.

Within our requests, you will find proposals to sustain our state's COVID-19 testing and contact tracing activities to detect and prevent infection, and a plan to bolster our immunization program in preparation for a vaccine. We also request funding to maintain and operate five core public health data systems that have been indispensable during our response to the pandemic and the coexisting opioid crisis. In addition, I submit a continuation of previous requests to fill the funding gaps, which the pandemic has so clearly exposed, in our state's foundational public health services.

In compliance with your memorandum dated June 15, 2020, we also reluctantly submit budget reduction proposals which total 15 percent of the agency's General Fund-State appropriation. Given the budget challenges induced by the pandemic, we certainly understand the need to provide budget savings options. However, it would be counterproductive to reduce public health funding in the midst of a public health crisis.

The state's public health system has many needs in addition to those identified in our 2021-23 biennium request. However, this set of budget requests represent our immediate concerns.

I look forward to discussing these issues.

Attachment

cc: Bryce Andersen, Office of Financial Management
Molly Voris, Governor's Policy Office
Jessica Todorovich, Department of Health
Kelly Cooper, Department of Health
Amy Ferris, Department of Health