

NEWS RELEASE

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County Commissioners Vote to Approve Public Health Millage for November's Ballot

(SAGINAW) – The Saginaw County Board of Commissioners voted tonight to approve language proposing a public health millage on the November 3 ballot.

The proposal will ask voters to support 0.48 mills to provide necessary funding so that the health department can continue to manage the services it provides related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as mandated services to residents throughout the county, including investigation and management of other communicable diseases like hepatitis A and influenza; inspections to ensure safety at restaurants, tattoo parlors, spas, and salons; safe drinking water for rural residents using wells; safe water in pools and outdoor recreational swimming locations; hearing and vision screenings AND immunizations for school-age children throughout the county's 14 school districts; laboratory services for drug screenings; and other services established to solve health disparity throughout the county including WIC, personal health, and nurse and family partnership.

The millage equates to \$25 annually on a home valued at \$100,000.

The health department is currently funded with federal, state and county dollars, much of which has been slashed year after year for the past two decades. Michigan ranks as the ninth lowest in funding for public health at less than \$13 per person annually. Other states at the top of the list provide closer to \$150 per person annually.

“Safeguarding our Saginaw communities from infectious diseases like COVID-19, hepatitis A, influenza and others is something we know people want from the Saginaw County Health Department,” says Chris Harrington, health officer. “An investment of \$25 annually for the average homeowner will keep us from cutting vital programs and services that keep our air, food and drinking water safe, our children immunized against illnesses and checked for hearing and vision, and so many more vital services that impact every single person in the urban and rural areas of our county.”

The millage will also help build capacity for staffing required for contact tracing during the pandemic and better epidemiologic assessment to guide the department in combating the spread of COVID-19.

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The approved language of the proposal states:

“For the purpose of reinforcing public health infrastructure and restoring capacity; to ensure adequate staffing, data analysis and reporting, critical technology needs, broader capacity to provide direct services, adequate facilities, resource readiness for emergencies, and continued communication with health partners, county leaders, and the public, shall the County of Saginaw increase in the limitation of the total amount of general ad-valorem taxes which may be imposed for all purposes upon all taxable real and personal property in Saginaw County, as authorized by Article 9, Section 6 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963, as amended, and levy up to .48 Mill (\$0.48 per \$1,000) of taxable valuation on such property as finally equalized during the years 2020 – 2029, both inclusive, which if approved and levied in its entirety is estimated to raise \$2,435,478 in the first year.”

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