

## NEWS RELEASE

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE:** 09/22/2020

**CONTACT:** Christina Harrington, MPH  
**TITLE:** Health Officer  
**PHONE:** (989) 758-3813  
**EMAIL:** charrington@saginawcounty.com

### **Information about County Proposal 20-1: Saginaw County Health Department New Millage Proposal**

**WHAT:**

On the November 3<sup>rd</sup> ballot (in the proposal section), voters are being asked to support 0.48 mills for 10 years to provide necessary funding so the Saginaw County Health Department can continue to deliver services to everyone in Saginaw County.

**HOW MUCH DOES IT COST:**

The total cost would not exceed \$2.08 per month per \$100,000 of market value of property...or approximately \$25 annually.

**WHAT DOES IT PAY FOR:**

- Sustained operation of 1-2 mobile units returning services to out-county areas and enhancing services county-wide beyond the health department building on Michigan Avenue.
- A full-time epidemiologist to delve into Saginaw County's higher-than-average cancer, asthma, heart disease, and mortality rates.
- Instead of ONE nurse, a team of nurses for disease surveillance and investigation of more than 100 diseases including influenza, Hepatitis A, and COVID-19.
- New equipment and increased testing capacity for the public health laboratory.
- Enhanced public communications for reliable health information and education.

**WHO BENEFITS FROM THE SERVICES OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT:**

We all benefit from the services of the Saginaw County Health Department daily if we:

- Eat restaurant food – the health department educates staff and inspects kitchens to keep us safe from food-borne illnesses.
- Spend time outdoors – the health department monitors for West Nile virus and EEE to protect us from mosquito-borne diseases.
- Own a well – the health department tests the water for safety and purity. They do the same for public swimming pools, recreational swimming areas, and spas.

MORE

- Visit a body art studio or salon for permanent make up – the health department inspects their operations and ensure their equipment is properly sterilized to protect us from blood-borne diseases.
- Send children to school – the health department keeps them on the path to learning by provide hearing and vision screenings, immunizations, and communicable disease prevention.
- Go to work or visit public buildings – the health department monitors air quality to protect us from air-borne diseases.
- Are impacted by disaster or emergency – the health department deploys experts to protect us from contaminated flood waters, pandemics, and more.

The Saginaw County Health Department safeguards Saginaw from COVID-19 and all other diseases. They work to make sure that our air, water, food, schools, businesses, stores, salons, restaurants, and neighborhoods are safe. While they are much more visible now during the pandemic, they are ALWAYS behinds the scenes protecting the community from disease.

#### **WHY ASK COUNTY RESIDENTS FOR A MILLAGE:**

Funding for public health has drastically declined in Michigan in the last two decades. At the same time, local health department are required by law to provide an increasing number of services. Resources to do their “regular jobs” are already too scarce. They are simply inadequate when faced with unprecedented responses to new and emerging infectious diseases like swine flu, ebola, H1N1 and COVID-19.

Thanks to a partnership with CMU Health, the Saginaw County Health Department now has a valued addition in part-time medical director Delicia Pruitt, MD. And while they continue to work diligently to improve the health of our entire population, the health department is still fighting the fight with too few resources to truly safeguard Saginaw.

#### **WHY DOES SAGINAW NEEDS SAFEGUARDING:**

Beyond the obvious impact of COVID-19 and other emerging infectious diseases, Saginaw is suffering from poor health outcomes. Sadly, we rank 77<sup>th</sup> out of 83 counties in Michigan. Obesity, inactivity, alcohol consumption, smoking and food inequities are contributing factors. So are higher than average rates of infant mortality, cancer, heart disease, and sexually transmitted infections than the rest of our state and nation. These aren’t problems that hospitals or doctors fix.

These are public health problems. They impact our community’s quality of life. Solutions require adequate numbers of public health experts and better mobility to reach people county-wide...and better technology and more robust data to investigate, analyze and understand how and why these problems are occurring.

MORE

**WHAT IF THE PROPOSAL FAILS:**

Without local support, the Saginaw County Health Department will not have the resources and required infrastructure to improve health outcomes in the county, provide services, AND respond to emerging infectious diseases like COVID-19.

**WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[www.yes2publichealth.org](http://www.yes2publichealth.org)

Yes to Public Health on Facebook

[www.saginawpublichealth.org](http://www.saginawpublichealth.org)

Saginaw County Health Department – SCHD on Facebook

###