Minnesota Policy Agenda Wrap-Up: 2017 Progress

**Good Food Access Program (GFAP):** GFAP may receive up to $250,000 per year for the next two years under the Omnibus Agriculture Finance Bill that was passed and signed into law by Gov. Dayton. The language specifically allows the Commissioner of Agriculture to use a portion of a flexible pot of funds for the GFAP. In his letter to the legislature about his signature of the bill, Gov. Dayton applauded the legislature for including additional funding in the Ag bill and for allocating a portion to Good Food Access. The Mn Dept. of Ag received more than 50 applications for over $1.5M in their first funding round for GFAP funding with just $150,000 available. We will be working with policymakers to get them to fully fund the program at $10 million per year. **Good Food Access Program is allocated $500,000 for the next biennium to provide grants, loans and technical assistance to improve healthy food access in Minnesota!**

**Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP):** At the start of the legislative session, SHIP was in trouble of losing its base funding appropriation of $35 million per biennium. After a great deal of messaging, grassroots mobilization, and support from AHA and other SHIP coalition partners we were very excited to see SHIP get full funding in both House and Senate HHS bills. SHIP remained fully funded, however the use of funds were expanded for opioid prevention grants, which should have been funded through a separate funding stream. **The Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) was fully funded again for $35 million for the next two years!**

**Active Transportation:** Given the uphill battle we faced to get the Governor and Legislature to include active transportation in the broader transportation discussion, we are thrilled that they included our language to establish Minnesota’s first-ever State Active Transportation Program in state statute. While no funding was allocated, this was a significant victory and a sign of real progress in our efforts to elevate walking and bicycling within the transportation discussion. We will continue to press the Governor and Legislature to identify a significant ongoing funding source for the program. There is an estimated $1.3 billion in unmet local needs for walk/bike infrastructure across Minnesota. **AHA led coalition efforts to ensure Minnesota’s first-ever statewide Active Transportation Program was established into law!**

**Safe Routes to School:** AHA and coalition partners introduced a bill that would fund Minnesota’s Safe Routes to School by $6 million per year. With many competing budget priorities, the program ended up receiving $1 million in new one-time resources for infrastructure grants included in the bonding bill. The Omnibus Transportation Bill also included $500,000 per year in MnDOT’s base for Safe Routes. We are pleased that the Legislature and Gov. Dayton included ongoing base funding for Safe Routes, and the small one-time increase for infrastructure grants, however, the statewide demand for resources far exceeds this amount so we will continue to advocate for additional Safe Routes resources in the future. MnDOT has funded almost 300 Safe Routes planning grants since 2006 and in 2015 there were requests totaling $13.6 million for the $5 million available. **Safe Routes to School was funded at $2 million for the next two years!**

For more information or to get involved in advocacy efforts, please contact Anne Simaytis at anne.simaytis@heart.org or visit our website at www.yourethecure.org
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Palliative Care: We are excited that the bill to create a Palliative Care Advisory Board at the MN Department of Health was signed into law as part of the HHS Omnibus Bill with full funding at $88,000 for two years! The bipartisan support, collaboration with American Cancer Society-Cancer Action Network, and top notch volunteer testimony helped make this bill cut through the noise at the capitol this year and bring some much-needed agreement on at least one right step for patients in MN dealing with a complicated medical condition. A new Palliative Care Working Group will be established with $88,000 in funding over the next two years!

Tobacco 21: The goal of Minnesotans for a Smoke Free Generation this year was to do outreach, education and build momentum for a statewide Tobacco 21 bill. Sen. Carla Nelson from Rochester introduced a bill to help build awareness and momentum, however, the bill did not advance this session. We were proud to be a part of the coalition that advanced the City of Edina T21 ordinance that passed this spring. With Edina becoming the very first city in the state to raise the purchase age of tobacco from 18 to 21, we anticipate more cities will take on a local ordinance to help prevent kids from tobacco use. Tobacco 21 state legislation was introduced and Edina became the first city in Minnesota to raise the purchase age of tobacco products from 18 to 21 and helping to stop the more than 13,000 youth in the city from ever starting the deadly tobacco habit.

Tobacco Tax Issues: AHA advocates for high tobacco taxes because we know that higher pricing pushes current smokers to quit and keeps the most price sensitive consumer, children, from ever starting. This year, despite solid efforts and the Governor’s support, two tax CUTS were passed into law for big tobacco. The “inflator” which increases cigarette prices with inflation was eliminated and taxes on premium cigars were significantly reduced. Unfortunately, the Minnesota Legislature cut taxes on tobacco products $50 million per year.

Grassroots Impact:
- Nearly 7,000 emails and social media messages sent to lawmakers.
- Over 400 advocates attended the third annual Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition Day at the Capitol
- More than 2,500 petition cards were delivered to lawmakers.
- More than 725 meetings with lawmakers were held throughout the year at in-district meetings and during lobby day.