

# 2018 STATE Legislative Priorities



STRONG FAMILIES



HEALTH CARE ACCESS



SAFE COMMUNITIES



ACHIEVEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT



TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT



GENERAL GOVERNMENT



LIBRARIES



## Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

## Mission

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

## Goals



WELL-BEING

### **Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being**

through effective safety-net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention, and environmental stewardship.



PROSPERITY

### **Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty**

through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.



OPPORTUNITY

### **Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses**

through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.



ACCOUNTABILITY

### **Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments**

through professional operations and financial management.

Information about how the county is pursuing its mission and goals is available in the county's Strategic Plan at [ramseycounty.us/strategicplan](http://ramseycounty.us/strategicplan)

Information about performance measures related to the county's mission and goals is available in the county's Open Performance portal at [openperformance.ramseycounty.us](http://openperformance.ramseycounty.us)

## Legislative guiding principles

These legislative guiding principles provide a foundation for the specific initiatives and support items that are included in the 2018 State Legislative platform. In a field as dynamic as the legislature, these basic tenets inform Ramsey County’s response to legislative proposals as they are introduced and move through the process.

### Residents-First Focus

- Prioritize support for legislative proposals that clearly improve how government works with and serves Ramsey County residents.
- Evaluate the impact of legislative proposals on residents and provide opportunities for affected communities to publicly discuss and influence legislation.

### Responsible, Responsive Government

- Communicate openly with the public and operate transparently.
- Observe good data practices to protect individual privacy and provide access to public data.
- Equalize access to government resources, opportunity and services across all communities.
- Respond proactively to address the needs of vulnerable children and adults and at-risk families who are experiencing instability and difficulty in meeting basic needs.
- Tend to ongoing maintenance and planning for future infrastructure needs.
- Advance information/data technology and ongoing updates that support program integrity and efficient service delivery.
- Increase citizen access to the polls and voting participation.
- Engage in good stewardship of natural resources.
- Encourage inter-governmental collaboration built on the goals of improving performance, increasing efficiencies and building trust across programs, governmental agencies and communities.
- Support local authority to define local priorities.

### Stable, Sufficient Funding:

- Allocate adequate state funding to counties to carry out state mandates.
- Distribute funding equitably, based on fair and practical distribution formulas.
- Acknowledge county costs for existing or new state mandates.
- Support county innovations in the delivery of mandated service when efficiencies can be gained.
- Respect local government control of their resources and budgetary processes.
- Expend funds for the purposes for which they are collected or allocated.

### Practice-Based Policy:

- Invest in practice-based policies that include ongoing assessment and adjustments to improve effectiveness of services and to save tax dollars.
- Emphasize prevention and early intervention.
- Promote stable families, safe neighborhoods, public safety, health and wellness by engaging individual and community strength.
- Foster economic development, broad access to education and training, and growth of living-wage jobs.
- Pursue policy that is not impinged by excessive, unnecessary regulation.

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**2018 State Legislative Platform**

## Bonding Requests

### Ramsey County Requests

- **UPDATED:** Battle Creek Winter Recreation Construction, \$2.126 million.
- **NEW:** Landmark Center Restroom Updates, \$350,000.
- UP Railroad/BNSF Railway Grade Separation Project, \$1 million (general fund appropriation).
- Riverview Corridor, \$2 million.
- Rush Line Corridor, \$2 million.

### Bonding Support Items

- Completion of the Trout Brook/Gateway Trail (Department of Natural Resources), \$600,000.
- Kellogg Street Bridge Replacement (City of Saint Paul), \$48 million.
- **NEW:** Parks and Trails Capital Improvement Projects (Metropolitan Council), \$15 million
- **UPDATED:** Improvement of the Police Shooting Range In Maplewood (Sen. Kent and Rep. Ward), \$3.8 million.
- **UPDATED:** Eastside Freedom Library HVAC Modernization (Sen. Hawj and Rep. Mahoney), \$1.2 million.
- **NEW:** Ivy Street Humanities Center (Sen. Hawj and Rep. Mahoney), \$2.7 million.
- **UPDATED:** Bruce Vento Nature Center (Sen. Hawj and Rep. S. Johnson), \$3 million.
- **NEW:** Mental Health Community Service Centers (Sen. Senjem), \$50 million.

## Funding and Policy Priorities



### Strong Families

Support state investment in services that promote healthy families and provide the essentials for early development. Support sufficient funding to provide prevention, early intervention and crisis services to protect at-risk families, children and vulnerable adults.

#### Child Protection

Continue to update the state-directed/county-managed child protection system, including policy, practice, financing and staffing, with attention to racial disparities and early intervention efforts that recognize the primacy of early childhood development and the importance of stable, nurturing families.

- **NEW: Match the Statute of Limitation for Failure to Report Child Sexual Abuse with the Statute of Limitation for Child Sexual Abuse.**

State law currently defines who is mandated to report suspected child maltreatment or abuse to law enforcement or human services authorities. Under current statute, a mandated reporter can be charged with failure to report for up to three years after the sexual abuse offense occurred. However, the statute of limitation for the sexual abuse of a child is much longer – nine years or within three years of the report to law enforcement – in recognition of the fact that children often do not tell anyone about the abuse until later. Lengthening the statute of limitation for failure to report by a mandated reporter should match that of the sexual abuse statute of limitations.

**LEAD: Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA).**

- **NEW: Protect All High School Students Against Sexual Exploitation by School Employees**

A recent media report highlighted the need to strengthen state law regarding the maltreatment of students, specifically the sexual abuse of high school students by teachers. The Department of Education’s current practice is to not report incidences of abuse by teachers or other school staff to law enforcement or human services authorities when the victims are students ages 18 or older. The sexual abuse or exploitation of all high school students, regardless of their age, must be criminalized to ensure that all students are afforded protection.

**LEAD: Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA).**

#### **NEW: Promote the Two-Generation Approach in State and County Services**

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) is currently meeting with state, county and community partners to explore establishing five pilot projects based on a two-generational approach. One of the pilots will be located in Ramsey County with the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood program. With its partners, DHS will examine pilot outcomes and produce a report and recommendations to the legislature to expand two-generation-based programs statewide.

At the center of the two-generation approach is the tenet that intentionally and equally focusing on both parents and children when designing and delivering services yields the best outcomes. Considering the whole family requires a focus on five key components: post-secondary education and employment pathways; early childhood education and development; economic assets; social capital; and health and well-being for both children and adults simultaneously. DHS will provide

planning grants to five collaborative initiatives that aim to authentically address systematic barriers and challenges to support families in a more holistic way. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the pilot projects will demonstrate that investing in two-generation efforts advances economic security for children, parents and families statewide.

**LEAD: Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).**

**UPDATED: MNChoices: Sunset Cost Shift to Counties and Continue to Seek Additional Assessment Efficiencies**

In 2017, the legislature made an almost 16 percent reduction in funding to administer MNChoices, which will seriously impact the county’s capacity to serve residents if left unaddressed. For Ramsey County, the lost reimbursement is projected to be approximately \$2 million per year. Funding should be restored and provisions to improve administrative efficiencies should be approved to ensure the county can continue to effectively implement MNChoices and properly serve residents.

**LEAD: Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).**

**NEW: Child Support: Simplify Application of New Parenting Expense Adjustments for Older Support Orders**

After the 2016 state legislature made changes to the parenting expense adjustment (PEA), it was discovered that Minnesota case law and statute relating to child support modification are inconsistent. Clarifications are necessary to help families get their child support orders modified to fit the new PEA law.

**LEAD: Child Support Guidelines Task Force.**

**Child Care: Maximize the Use of All Available Child Care Subsidy Funds through Strategic Wait-List Changes**

The current prioritization of families on the waiting list for child care subsidies is disadvantaging low-income, working families who have not used MFIP. This proposal would better utilize all child care subsidy funding streams and allow more families to receive this essential work-related support.

**LEAD: RAMSEY COUNTY and Hennepin County.**



**Health Care Access**

Support continued funding for initiatives to ensure that all residents have access to health care services.

**Mental and Chemical Health**

In early 2016, the Governor appointed a Task Force on Mental Health to assess the current mental health system and to make recommendations for improvements. The Task Force issued their final report that includes nine recommendations to provide a comprehensive approach to treating and supporting those who have a mental illness. Several of those recommendations focus on the serious need for the development of community-based services and the update of the state’s civil commitment process, including how it interfaces with the competency and other justice system processes.

- **NEW: Develop Community-Based Mental Health Placement Options and Services**

When counties place an individual in a state-operated facility for mental health or competency restoration services, the county currently must pay an increasing portion of the costs for an individual’s care after inpatient-level care is no longer deemed necessary. One of the main reasons for longer stays in state facilities is the critical shortage of appropriate community care settings to which people can be discharged. To begin to address this

underlying problem, county payments should be specifically designated for the development of community alternatives.

**LEAD: Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).**

- **NEW: Revise the Civil Commitment Statute to Improve the Response to Defendants who are Experiencing Mental Illness**

Under Minnesota’s judicial system, the court procedures for determining competency to stand trial and for civil commitment are separate processes. In many cases, these separate processes create a gap in accessing services when a defendant is found incompetent to stand trial but not civilly committed, and therefore, not necessarily referred to services to address their ongoing mental health needs. This limits the response provided by the state and counties, which is not cost effective and fails to consider public safety.

Another barrier occurs when jailed defendants who have a mental illness and are civilly committed are not transferred to a state facility within 48 hours. A critical shortage of treatment beds at state treatment facilities frequently delays these transfers.

Reforming the civil commitment and competency processes and providing additional community-based services are essential components for improving the state’s mental health system.

**LEAD: Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).**

- **NEW: Support Efforts and Funding to Address Opioid and Other Drug Abuse**

Counties are often the first to respond to alcohol and other drug abuse incidence in their jurisdictions, whether through corrections, child protection or health care. The steep increase in the use of opioids in the last five years has significantly increased societal and economic costs, some of which counties are responsible for. To gain ground against this costly epidemic, a systemic public health approach that emphasizes prevention and early intervention needs to be funded and supported by government at all levels.

**LEAD: Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).**

**Increase Funding for the Minnesota Eligibility and Technology System (METS)**

Increased funding is needed to improve the computer system that counties must use to assess applicant eligibility for health care programs and to efficiently identify and correct errors.

Technology improvements are needed to assist financial aid workers following eligibility updates, increased demands for services and the addition of state-mandated data matching activities.

**LEAD: Minnesota Association of Social Service Administrators (MACSSA).**

**Continue to Improve Health Care Access for All Residents**

Insurance costs are surging, threatening access for many people, especially those who recently gained coverage because of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and expansion of Medical Assistance in Minnesota. Health care access needs to be maintained and core elements of the ACA need to be preserved, including coverage for dependents up to age 26, the prohibition of denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions and the prohibition of lifetime caps for coverage.

**LEAD: Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).**



## Safe Communities

Support local law enforcement, justice initiatives and corrections services that foster safe communities by investing in preventative, early intervention efforts and community-based correctional services.

### **NEW: Fund the Ramsey County Supervised Release Revocation Intervention Pilot**

Ramsey County has the second highest rate of probation revocation among Minnesota's 87 counties. Probation requires offenders to adhere to supervised release conditions. Violation of those conditions, both serious and technical, often result in offenders being returned to prison. Re-incarcerations herald poor short and long-term outcomes for offenders. Additionally, costs for incarceration are significantly higher than for supervised release. Ramsey County seeks state support and funding for a revocation prevention and intervention program that works closely with at-risk and non-compliant probationers to get them back on track and help them maintain supervisory compliance. Funding could come from the savings the state would realize from avoiding prison re-incarceration, for which the state is financially responsible. Additionally, keeping more of these offenders out of prison would decrease the pressure on the state to build new prison beds.

**LEAD: RAMSEY COUNTY**

### **NEW: Limit the Length of Probationary Terms, with Exceptions for Certain Crimes**

Per capita, Minnesota has more offenders on probation than any other state. Additionally, probationary terms in months and years are the longest in the nation. Probation in lieu of incarceration is a means for containing overall correctional costs and also produces better outcomes for offenders. The lengths of probation for non-violent crimes may be excessive, however, thus diminishing the benefits. A reduction in probationary terms – except for sex offenders and certain other offenders – would likely save money without jeopardizing public safety.

**LEAD: Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC).**

### **NEW: JDAI – Support Ongoing State Funding to Replace Expiring Private Foundation Grant Funds (Annie E. Casey)**

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) was designed to support the Annie E. Casey Foundation's vision that all youth involved in the juvenile justice system have opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adults. After more than 20 years of innovation and replication, JDAI is one of the nation's most effective, influential and widespread juvenile justice system reform initiatives. In 2018, funding from the Casey Foundation is set to cease. Ongoing, stable funding from the state is needed to continue this proven approach to working with juveniles. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development.

**LEAD: Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI).**



## Achievement and Employment

Support educational, training and job-related services that provide opportunities for all residents to develop the skills necessary to build viable careers with wages that support self-sufficiency.

### **UPDATED: SNAP Employment and Training Programs: Support Local Flexibility**

Currently, Minnesota mandates that able-bodied adults enrolled in the federal- and state-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) must participate in the SNAP Education and



Training (SNAP E&T) program. The state has the option of making this requirement voluntary, which would allow local programs to strategically match these vital support services to specific participants. The Minnesota Department of Human Services will ask the state legislature for approval to include this change in the state's SNAP E&T Plan, which must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture annually.

**LEAD: Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).**



## Transportation and Transit

Support investment in building and maintaining a transportation and transit system that provides stable, efficient access to all communities, especially where a current lack of transit limits options for employment, housing, educational and recreational opportunities.

### **NEW: Provide Funding for the Twin Cities Milwaukee Chicago Passenger Rail Project Development**

The Twin Cities Milwaukee Chicago (TCMC) Passenger Rail Study will complete analysis for introducing a second daily train between the Twin Cities, Milwaukee and Chicago at speeds up to 80 mph. The alternative analysis and conceptual engineering was recently completed. Funding is needed to complete the environmental analysis, service development plan and final engineering. Passenger trains would utilize the existing Amtrak Empire Builder corridor from Union Depot in Saint Paul to Chicago. Minnesota station stops would include Union Depot in Saint Paul, Red Wing and Winona. MnDOT is requesting \$11 million for Passenger Rail Capital Investment funds. Of that amount, \$4 million is needed for the second train to Chicago from Union Depot for environmental pre-design work.

**LEAD: Minnesota Department of Transportation.**

### **Support MnDOT Local Bridge Replacement Program**

The Local Bridge Replacement Program administered by the State Aid Division of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) provides important funding support to counties, cities and townships for replacement, rehabilitation, or removal of deficient bridges across the state. Ramsey County supports MnDOT's efforts to secure state bridge bonds to fund this transportation program.

**LEAD: Minnesota Department of Transportation.**

### **Include Hennepin and Ramsey Counties as Recipients of Revenue Derived from the Leased Vehicle Sales Tax**

Currently, all metro-area counties receive funding for transportation projects through the leased vehicle tax, except Ramsey and Hennepin, even though most of the funds are collected in these two counties.

**LEAD: RAMSEY COUNTY and Hennepin County.**

### **Revise Eminent Domain Process**

Require that owners submit their basic property valuation 45 days (currently five days) before an eminent domain-related commission hearing date, giving counties time to amend their initial offers. Additionally, to contain public costs, tie the interest rate for awards to the U.S. Treasury Bill secondary market and establish parameters for attorney fees.

**LEAD: Minnesota County Engineers Association.**



## General Government

### **NEW: Data Practice: Foster Good Government Through Balanced Data Practices Laws**

The efficient, transparent operation of government is enhanced by well-balanced data practices and privacy laws. Defined public data access, coupled with prudent protection of information that is personal and defined as private or non-public, allows residents to keep informed of government actions. Technological advances and changes in business practices that rely less on paper and more on electronic formats (such as email) call for a review of current data practices laws.

Additionally, local governments are currently responsible for setting data retention schedules and reporting them to the state. State-mandated retention schedules with fixed retention periods would

diminish flexibility for local governments, which provides better service to residents, tracks with local technical capabilities and fits local budgets. Updates to data practices laws should consider the costs to state and local governments and how these laws improve access; they should also address intentionally disruptive, expensive requests that provide little or no benefit to the public.

**LEAD: Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).**

### **Reclassify CERT Application Information as Non-Public**

CERT, the small business support program operated by Ramsey and Hennepin counties and the City of Saint Paul, requires that applicants provide financial information to prove they meet program eligibility. Under current law, this information is public, creating a disincentive for enrollment.

**LEAD: RAMSEY COUNTY.**

### **Stabilize PERA Funding**

In Minnesota, public pension benefit levels and contribution requirements are set by the state. State funding is typically not provided for increased costs and must be paid by increased contributions from local government employers and employees. Any changes to the public pension system should be reasonable for both employers and employees, help stabilize the financial condition of the pension funds, and be adopted with adequate notice to allow proper budget planning by local governments.

**LEAD: Minnesota InterCounty Association (MICA).**



## Libraries

### **Support Library Funding Increases and a Distribution Formula Change**

The use of local libraries has increased and diversified in recent years to include access to job, health care and social services information, as well as cultural, historical and neighborhood events. Regional library grants need to be increased. Library groups support an increase of \$3 million statewide. If this funding is allocated, libraries also support adoption of a Minnesota Library Association-endorsed distribution formula that reflects population and local tax base.

**LEAD: Metropolitan Library Services Association and the Minnesota Library Association.**

## Ramsey County Platform Support of Other Positions

In addition to the initiatives contained in this platform, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners generally supports the legislative recommendations of the local units of government within the county and organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

- Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and its associated professional organizations.
- Ramsey/Washington Recycling and Energy Board.
- Partnership on Waste and Energy.
- Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM).
- Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).
- Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO).
- Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA).

The county board reserves the option to oppose individual items in these platforms that are contrary to the interest of the county.

The county board may also consider additional positions in response to issues that emerge during the legislative session.

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