April 25, 2025

Board of Estimate and Apportionment Board

Good afternoon, Mayor Spencer and members of the Board and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Dr. Danielle Binion, and I serve as the Chief Strategy Officer for the Community Health Commission of Missouri (CHCM). CHCM is a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating health disparities through equity-centered trauma-informed care approaches and systems level change.

I come to you in my professional role AND as a proud daughter of St. Louis. I was born and raised in the 10th Ward – nestled in the Academy and Fountain Park neighborhoods, AND a proud graduate of Sumner High School in the historic Ville neighborhood.

I’m here today to express strong support for full and sustained public health funding. Public health is focused on protecting and improving the health of entire communities, every ward, every person through prevention, promotion and protection as outlined in the Department of Health’s mission. With Missouri ranking 47th out of 51 states in terms of healthcare access, quality, efficiency and outcomes – we cannot afford to lose funding or focus! (\*Commonwealth Fund’s State Health System Performance Scorecard)

St. Louis City faces multiple, intersecting public health crises that our health department is actively at the forefront of addressing:

* Violence and Safety continue to be a pressing public health concern within our communities; St. Louis City has one of the highest violent crime rates in the country.
* This high crime rate negatively impacts mental health, stress levels, and overall community well-being. The department’s Mental Health Bureau addresses these negative effects through crises response, education training, and critical interventions like Narcan kit distribution.
* With the alarming rise of HIV and STI cases in St. Louis, the Department of Health has taken the lead on prevention, education, and health literacy efforts to better understand and respond to community needs with care and support.
* With an uninsured rate at 11.8%, well above the national average of 8.6%, and looming cuts to Medicaid, our communities are at a critical juncture. Disinvestment now would deepen existing health disparities AND also leave thousands without essential care and prevention services.

In the face of these challenges, CHCM partners with the City of St. Louis Department of Health to implement collaborative, community-driven solutions. These efforts included:

* PrepareSTL, a regional campaign implemented during the pandemic to support overlooked neighborhoods.
* Community Listening sessions
* And the Health Department’s Comprehensive Health Equity Plan, which lays out a long-term strategy to confront systemic disparities and expand access to care.

We encourage the board to protect the health of all St. Louisans through continued support and increased funding to the Department of Health.

We stand ready as a community-engaged partner to create healthier, and more resilient communities across St. Louis City.

Thank you for your time, commitment, and continued investment in our community.

**Additional detail on PrepareSTL**

Regional campaign to prevent the ongoing spread of COVID-19 in St. Louis. The City of St. Louis Department of Health has partnered with the Regional Health Commission, St. Louis County, and other community health organizations to create a collaborative campaign called PrepareSTL [www.preparestl.com]. The campaign is to help prepare all St. Louisans for the effects of the COVID-19 response, how to stop its spread, and how to survive the pandemic physically, emotionally, and economically.

PrepareSTL distributed approximately 300,000 cloth and surgical masks. Approximately 183 canvassers distributed masks in 70 street and mobile canvasses, reaching 683 community hot spots. In total, PrepareSTL assembled and distributed 100,000 PPE kits.