

Hennepin County

2024 State Legislative Priorities and Platform



November 2023

hennepin.us



Here together. For the better.

Hennepin County is Minnesota's most populated county with 1.3 million residents. That only tells part of the story.

Hennepin County includes: 45 municipalities that span from urban cities to rural communities; global destinations like the Mall of America; major transit hubs like the Minneapolis — St. Paul International Airport; and important innovation and research centers like the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

The county is also a center of commerce. Approximately one-third of the state's jobs come from businesses in Hennepin County, including 8 Fortune 500 Companies, such as Target, UnitedHealth Group, and Best Buy, and agriculture giants such as Cargill. In addition,

Minnesota's economy is driven by small business and entrepreneurs. Hennepin County recognizes that small businesses are the foundation of our economy and often the heart of our communities. The US Census Bureau reports Minnesota is home to more than 409,000 non-employer businesses — or the self-employed.

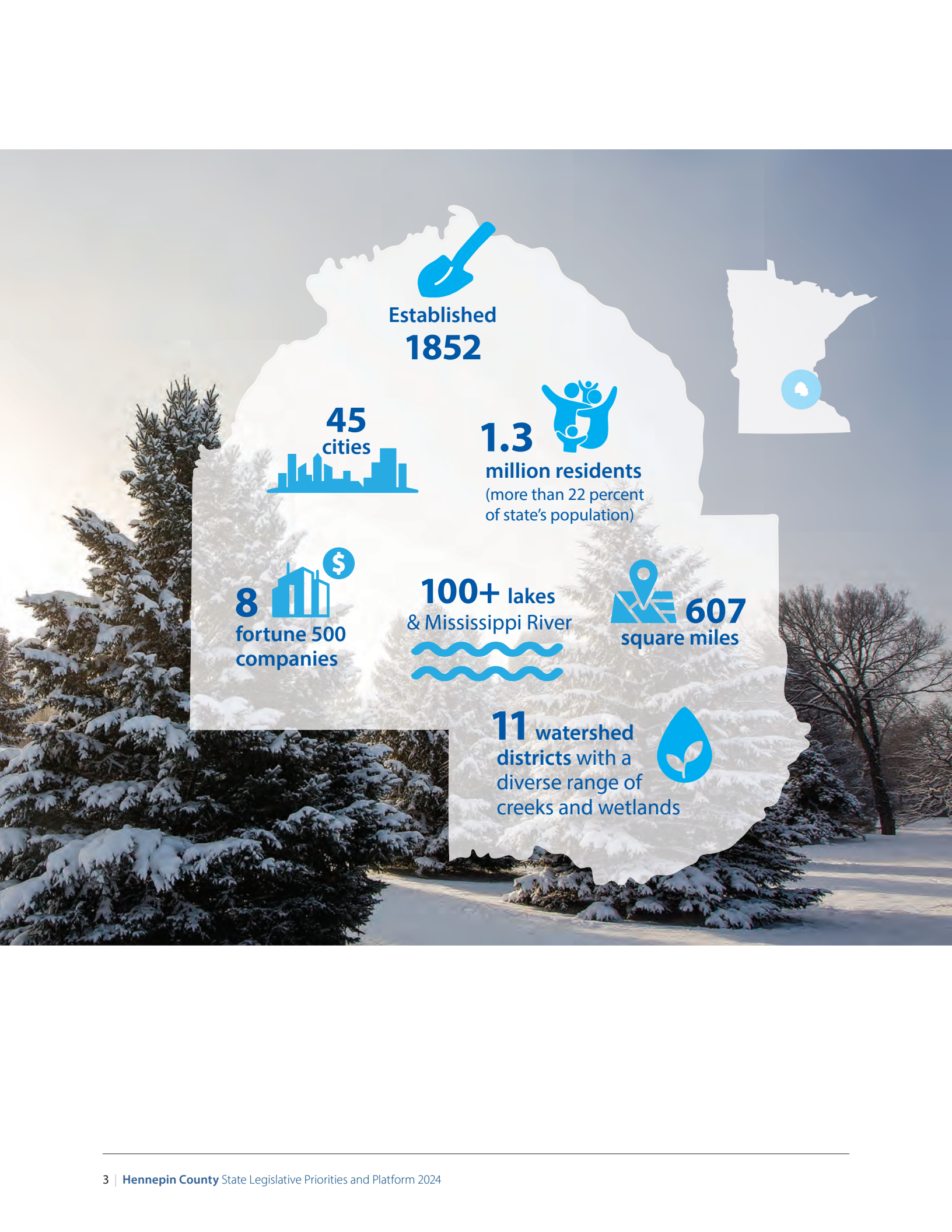
This wealth of small businesses has helped to uniquely enrich the Twin Cities metro area. Minneapolis – St. Paul ranks as the 17th most diverse economy among all 384 metropolitan areas in the United States.

Minnesota's robust and diverse economy is aligned with that of Hennepin County. Together, we all do better.

Hennepin County's 2024 State Legislative Priorities and Platform has numerous requests, with many that will benefit residents throughout the state. This includes requests that change systems to help build equity for all. Others are environmental asks that will affect the air and water quality for all Minnesotans. And there are others for improved transportation systems, which are critical for employment and moving goods and services.

This platform asks for the state to invest in vital infrastructure, such as affordable housing. It asks for investments in children and families, as well as in health and health care. It asks for continued investments in employment pathways, especially as we see such low unemployment rates and know that businesses are hungry for people who can do the work.


The requests included here are about investing in Hennepin County priorities for the benefit of our residents and all Minnesotans.



Established
1852



45
cities

1.3 
million residents
(more than 22 percent
of state's population)

8 
fortune 500
companies

100+ lakes
& Mississippi River

 **607**
square miles

11 watershed
districts with a
diverse range of
creeks and wetlands



Priorities

Housing

Increase state resources to support safe and stable housing for all individuals and families.

Healthcare access

Ensure all residents have access to high quality, accessible, and culturally responsive healthcare. Promote long-term vitality and innovation at public safety net healthcare systems.

Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC)

Promote a zero-waste and clean energy future to help the county meet its climate action goals and to ensure the timeline for closure of HERC between 2028 and 2040.

Platform

Bonding



Hennepin Avenue bridges — \$8.6 million

Hennepin County is seeking state funding to recondition the iconic Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge and two approach bridges.

The funds will be used for design, construction and contract administration for the project. Without timely preservation, these bridges will continue to deteriorate — exponentially increasing future rehabilitation costs.

This important link across the Mississippi River supports multi-modal transportation, including for transit users and more than 2,500 people walking and rolling, 1,300 people biking and 22,000 people driving across the bridge daily.

Climate and environment

Protect the environment and conserve resources



Support legislation and policies that protect the environment, conserve resources, build equity and resiliency, and promote adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Promote and support state laws and programs that will help achieve the county's Climate Action Plan, Zero Waste, and Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions goals.

Climate and environment

Clean transportation

- Support state investments to reduce transportation-related carbon emissions, including, but not limited to, vehicle and transit electrification, electric vehicle charging stations, and infrastructure that connects people by all modes of travel.
- Promote the adoption of policies that support a pathway toward reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) in alignment with Hennepin County's goal to reduce VMT per capita by 20% by 2040.

Energy efficiency and renewables

- Support the transition from using carbon intensive fuels to 100% carbon-free, reliable, affordable and renewable energy, including geothermal and solar.
- Promote weatherization and energy efficiency for homeowners and renters, including education and assistance.

Natural resources

- Support legislation and state funding for local governments to protect and enhance community forests to mitigate the effects of climate change, reduce air pollution and manage tree waste.
- Respond to the loss of trees due to emerald ash borer and other invasive pests and pathogens.
- Support state funding for local administration of soil and water conservation districts.

Waste management

- Accelerate a zero-waste future to help the county meet its climate action goals and accelerate the timeline for closure of HERC between 2028 and 2040.
- Adopt extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging.
- Change organized collection process and hauler licensing.
- Adopt and enforce material bans at landfills for all materials that emit methane: food/organics, paper/cardboard, wood, and textiles.
- Fund a pre-processing facility in Hennepin County to recover reusable and recyclable materials from the trash before disposal.
- Support increased state funding for SCORE, expanding organics composting and anaerobic digestion initiatives, and promoting market development for recycled materials.
- Support the Partnership on Waste and Energy 2024 legislative platform.

General government

Improve government



Partner with the State of Minnesota to improve government services delivery, reduce mandates on local government, re-prioritize government spending and promote effective management of county programs by allowing local control.

General government

Elections

- Expand absentee voter outreach opportunities.
- Provide clarity and better access for absentee voting.
- Amend absentee ballot reporting requirements passed last year in order to allow timely election night reporting of results.
- Expand voter registration options for voters in jail or experiencing homelessness.
- Modernize special election timelines for Hennepin County Commissioners to bring statutes in line with state law.
- Support state-level standards and equipment for ranked choice voting.

Operations and administration

- Update and modernize marriage license application and reporting statute language; clarify marriage officiant requirements, standardize marriage certificate forms and allow deputy registrars to make technical corrections to marriage licenses.
- Support modifying or increasing certain marriage license, motor vehicle, watercraft, off road vehicle, and driver's license filing fees to make deputy registrars' offices more self-sufficient and reduce administrative burdens for local registrars.
- Make permanent the ability for people to remotely apply for marriage licenses.
- Support revenue sharing with the state's Driver and Vehicle Services for online transactions.
- Support legislation to lower costs for e-materials purchased by public libraries to allow for continued and consistent access by residents.

- Increase the amount of contracting and procurement the county does with small businesses and minority and women-owned companies by modifying set-aside contracting authority.

Data practices

- Oppose changes to the Minnesota Data Practices Act that require audit logs or audit trails that impose an undue financial or resource management burden on local units of government.
- Protect residents' personal information by making a person's address, phone number and email address private data.
- Support legislation that bases email retention policies on the information contained within the record and not on the file type to which it is stored; oppose legislation that requires government entities to retain emails that are not part of the official record and do not serve a business purpose.
- Update the Official Records Act to permit the digitization of all official records without prescribing the medium or technology.
- Support legislation changing notification of data breaches to only when the individual is at risk of harm. Reduce risk to counties by limiting monetary damages for alleged violations of the Data Practices Act to actual harm to an individual by an unauthorized disclosure of data.

Broadband

- Support changes to the state's Border-to-Border grant program to ensure that urban and suburban areas receive proportionate shares of state and federal broadband funding.
- Ensure state-administered broadband programs improve speed of existing services and are affordable for all residents.

Hennepin Healthcare System

Ensure access to healthcare services for all



Ensure access to the full continuum of healthcare services for all by addressing racism as a public health crisis through policies that reduce health disparities, increase equity, support the capacity of the healthcare workforce, and create financial stability for Hennepin Healthcare System as the state's safety-net provider.

Hennepin Healthcare System

Increase the financial stability of Hennepin Healthcare System

- Maximize Medicaid reimbursement and supplemental funding sources, including maintaining Medicaid direct payments, to support the largest Medicaid provider system and safety-net trauma hospital to manage the challenges of caring for a disproportionate share of medically and socially complex patients.
- Strengthen value-based-payment arrangements in Medicaid that improve outcomes and manage higher care costs associated with serving a disproportionate number of Medicaid patients with unmet social needs.
- Preserve hospital capacity for patients who need inpatient care by ensuring patients can swiftly and safely discharge to an appropriate setting through streamlining processes and investing in the capacity of long-term care, children's mental health services in the community, and other higher acuity mental health settings.

Increase health equity and improve population health through innovation and reform

- Support state investments to reduce health disparities in mental health and maternal healthcare, including supporting birthing people experiencing substance use disorder during pregnancy, and expanding trauma-responsive healthcare. Support innovative public health and healthcare delivery models that address social drivers of health; expanding the definition of the state plan benefit for Community Health Worker care coordination under Medicaid; and ensuring Hennepin Emergency Medical Services are available to all residents.

- Promote efforts to address the state's opioid crisis, including increased access to medication-assisted therapy, alternative pain management therapies, peer recovery supports, and Medicaid coverage while detained pre-trial.
- Support hospital-based violence intervention programs, gun-violence prevention efforts, and penalties that address workplace violence; increase the safety of our communities, employees, and patients.

Support the capacity of the healthcare workforce to ensure the delivery of exceptional care

- Promote policies that support increasing staff capacity in the healthcare workforce, including maintaining telehealth, improving licensing flexibilities and access to interpreters, and the licensure of Certified Midwives.
- Partner to ensure the evolution of academic medicine in Minnesota supports a strong healthcare ecosystem, creates a workforce reflective of patients, and addresses existing workforce and provider shortages in Minnesota, especially in the mental healthcare system. Remove barriers to employment for justice-involved individuals and enact programs that create a pathway for youth of color to enter and stay in healthcare professions.
- Support efforts to increase equitable access to medical education, including maintaining current state investment in Graduate Medical Education and healthcare workforce development, including tax incentives for educators and continued funding for Project Echo for real-time learning for front-line providers.

Health and human services

Improve outcomes for all residents



Ensure that mental health, chemical health and public health systems work to improve outcomes for all residents, especially the most vulnerable. Reduce disparities by supporting preventative models of care and early intervention service to avoid overreliance on crisis response. Advance new policies and funding mechanisms that recognize racism as a public health crisis.

Health and human services

Systems reforms

- Improve technological systems, including METS, MAXIS/MEC², SSIS, PRISM, and MnCHOICES, to streamline and provide efficiencies and simplification to Health and Human Services Program requirements.
- Support changes to align and simplify program access and program rules.
- Maintain state support for local public health capacity to address health crises.
- Ensure payment parity in access and delivery of waiver-funded human services and health care programs when delivered virtually.
- Expand healthcare access and coverage that promote and improve health outcomes by granting continuous eligibility for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare for one year after eligibility is determined.
- Support comprehensive and equitable capitation rates under Minnesota Health Care Programs by adding social risk factors and revenue risk score adjustments into rate calculation.
- Support the sustainability of Personal Care Assistant (PCA) services to eliminate service disruptions and ensure around-the-clock access for eligible families.
- Increase state financial, technological, and administrative support to address caseload demands across the disability services continuum.
- Support technical fixes to 2023 cannabis legislation to fortify counties' public health role, including the logistics of monitoring, inspections, enforcement, regulation, and taxation.
- Support reforms to 2023 cannabis legislation that promote the education, well-being, and behavioral health needs of youth in the context of legal adult use.

- Support legislation that bolsters supportive services for all veterans and their families.
- Address the social determinants of health by expanding state support for the integration of programs within county affiliated structures. Oppose policies that fragment these services or otherwise create barriers to access.
- Support legislation to align recreational cannabis use with existing regulations limiting secondhand commercial tobacco smoke in multi-unit housing.

Invest in children and families

- Address the significant cost burden of child care for working families, a key factor in preventing communities from building wealth.
- Support state investment in and for community-driven solutions to improve maternal health, birth outcomes, and public health programming (e.g., Children and Teen Checkups, targeted home visiting, doula care), especially for communities of color.
- Ensure educational stability for youth in foster care.
- Advance legislation that reduces the disproportionate number of African American and American Indian children in the child protection system and increases frequency and timeliness of reunification.
- Support legislation to remove barriers created by current foster care licensing requirements that result in fewer African American and American Indian foster families.
- Support stabilizing transition to adulthood from the child protection system for county youth.

Health and human services

Invest in health through mental health and substance use disorder services access and improvements

- Increase state support to meet the needs of county residents with mental health challenges, including culturally responsive services, early crisis interventions, and services required for stabilizing residents in the community.
- Invest in preventive upstream services to reduce the harmful impact of substance use disorder and the opioid epidemic, including readily available opiate antagonists as an alternative to emergency crisis requests.
- Support efforts to integrate mental health, housing, chemical health, and criminal justice interventions-especially data-, to improve residents' outcomes and reduce recidivism.
- Support integrated state-county funding and services model to comprehensively address the needs of children and families with complex behavioral health issues.
- Support efforts for smokefree campuses for mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers.
- Support legislation to end the sale of all menthol and flavored commercial tobacco products statewide.
- Support greater state investment in mental and chemical health services delivered in primary care settings.

Housing

Support safe and stable housing



Increase state resources to support safe and stable housing for all individuals and families.

Housing

- Increase accessible, affordable long-term housing for residents with no income up to 50% Area Median Income (AMI), prioritizing affordability up to 30% AMI.
- Increase housing and related services options for residents with disabilities exiting or diverting from institutional care who need on-site support to integrate their communities successfully.
- Provide capital support and sustainable operational funding to make safe, dignified, and housing-focused emergency shelters available to residents experiencing homelessness.
- Continue to reform the Housing Support Program to remove the financial disincentives that cause residents to choose unsheltered settings and ensure the program reflects real costs in the housing market.
- Support dedicated revenue to and reduce administrative burden on counties to meet affordable housing needs.

Law, safety and justice

Protect public safety



Preserve and protect public safety through state-county partnerships that address funding challenges and support reform.

Law, safety and justice

Increase funding

- Promote fully funding the newly created community corrections formula to ensure adequate and ongoing state funding for supervision of individuals under court jurisdiction in the community.
- Support investments in community providers necessary to support successful reintegration of individuals in the criminal legal system into the community.

Remove barriers

- Support the unique needs of those involved in the criminal legal system who are female identified and/or juveniles by strengthening collaboration with and funding for trauma-informed and culturally specific community-based programming in support of corrections systems.
- Support statutory changes to remove barriers in housing and employment for the survivors of human trafficking and those formerly involved in the criminal legal system.
- Expand expungement statute to support individuals with housing or employment barriers who have demonstrated a commitment to rehabilitation and community enhancement.
- Support state leadership to integrate human-centered design principles and to coordinate the efficient administration of public safety answering points (PSAP's) across jurisdictional lines.
- Ensure fully effective legal counsel by expanding information sharing of information for clients served by Adult Representation Services.
- Support efforts to ensure that non-citizen residents are assured due process in the criminal legal system, be free from harassment, and supported in their efforts to remain in Minnesota and contribute to community vibrance.

Improve outcomes

- Promote licensing and systems reforms to support healthy outcomes for youth involved in the criminal legal system.
- Support regional cost-effective evidence-based solutions that deliver better outcomes and lower recidivism for youth supervised by probation. Adopt recommendations from Working Group on Youth Interventions.
- Support legislation that creates a safer working environment for staff.
- Ensure further reforms to the "48-hour rule," facilitate greater access to behavioral health services and reduce racial disparities in the public safety and health systems.

Taxes

Assure flexibility to serve our residents



Protect state funding for mandated services and assure flexibility to serve our residents without undue reliance on property taxes.

Taxes

- Support County Program Aid (CPA) that funds county-mandated services and reduces reliance on property tax.
- Ensure veterans and their spouses/partners remain eligible for the veterans' property tax exclusion.
- Modernize property tax regulations to improve equity for vulnerable populations, reduce disparities, and close loopholes.
- Support legislation that promotes adoption of conservation easements.
- Update state assessor duties to reflect modern guidance and standards provided by the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) and allow assessors to access data to ensure accurate and transparent assessments.
- Support efforts to make the property tax system more equitable by expanding homestead market value exclusion, property tax refunds, and modifying classifications.
- Correct technical deficiencies in recently adopted Metro Housing Sales Tax.

Transportation

Strengthen the long-term value of neighborhoods and communities



Strengthen the long-term value of neighborhoods and communities through strategic public investments in infrastructure that improve mobility and safety, connect people to jobs, reduce disparities, and reduce transportation carbon emissions.

Transportation

- Collaborate with corridor agency partners on an anti-displacement legislative package to aid in protecting and building equity for existing community members and businesses.
- Support legislation that promotes the advancement of the Blue Line Light Rail Transit Project. This includes, but is not limited to, right-of-way acquisition, insurance, liability, interjurisdictional coordination, federal regulatory requirements, and funding.
- Support the Metropolitan Council's implementation of Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT), including fully funding ABRT project scope, along various routes in Hennepin County to provide shorter transit times, increased ridership, and expanded mobility for communities along the proposed lines.
- Support state investments to implement and maintain infrastructure and Toward Zero Deaths initiatives that enable safe access for all users, including Active Transportation, Complete Streets and Green Streets, to provide modal options, improve quality of life and reduce unsafe driving practices that lead to traffic injuries and fatalities.
- Modify the special distribution of leased vehicle sales tax in the metro area to fairly include Hennepin and Ramsey counties.
- Oppose any increase in weight or size limits for commercial trucks and other motor vehicles.
- Support increased funding for the Local Bridge Replacement Program and the Local Road Improvement Program, including funding for the Hennepin Avenue Bridge reconditioning project.
- Support MnDOT's Corridor of Commerce program and funding to achieve the full corridor vision for projects in Hennepin County.
- Support state investments to reduce transportation carbon emissions, including, but not limited to, vehicle and transit electrification, electric vehicle charging stations, and infrastructure that connects people by all modes of travel.
- Support state investment in Advanced Transportation Management System including traffic management cameras, fiber optic communication, and advanced software.

Workforce development

Meet the future workforce needs



Meet the future workforce needs of Hennepin County and other employers and address persistent disparities by connecting well-trained and qualified individuals to high-demand jobs in our region.

Workforce development

- Support efforts to raise and protect wages for residents at the lowest income levels and industries most affected by the pandemic, including raising the minimum wage to provide a livable wage and reflect regional costs of living.

Nonprofit requests

Support the following nonprofit organizations by serving as the fiscal agent for state bonding proceeds.

- Avivo—\$26.7 million

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