



**1. Provide Local Tax Relief by Increasing County Program Aid.** Pope County supports additional funding to County Program Aid (CPA) in recognition of the ever-increasing costs paid by the County for State-mandated, County-provided services. Pope County must administer these state mandates, and when the State fails to fund these mandates, the State places this funding burden squarely on the County to pay for these ever-increasing costs through levying higher property taxes. Pope County's current CPA for 2023 is \$627,064, approximately 6% of its local levy, and significant local tax relief. However, this 2023 CPA amount is a decrease of 31.7% from 2002 CPA, and that is without even accounting for inflation and reduced dollar values. A significant infusion of new CPA funding is necessary to address historic funding shortages and keep pace with inflationary costs.

**2. Assure Adequate Funding for Rural Transportation Infrastructure.** With over 90% of Minnesota's road miles and 80% of its bridges on local road systems, current funding projections are inadequate to maintain and improve local roads and bridges under County jurisdiction. Pope County supports addressing this unsustainable funding gap through a multi-pronged approach. Pope County supports ongoing, dedicated funding for transportation in rural areas to address ongoing funding shortfalls, including those to the Highway Users Tax Distribution Fund. Pope County supports the robust utilization of bonding for rural transportation projects. Finally, Pope County also supports local option sales tax reform that allocates transportation funding more equitably and does not disproportionately favor urban areas and regional centers to the detriment of the state's rural areas.

**3. Protect County-Based Purchasing.** Pope County supports all aspects of County-Based Purchasing for delivery of Minnesota Health Care Programs, strengthening the quality of and access to health care in County communities and supporting local health care providers. This includes:

- re-shaping the state-county relationship related to County-Based Purchasing.
- creating a new chapter of state law for County-Based Purchasing recognizing County-Based Purchasing as an alternative model for delivery of Minnesota Health Care Programs.
- fully empowering counties that elect County-Based Purchasing for delivery of Minnesota Health Care Programs as provided for in state law (Minn. Stat. § 256B.692) through direct procurement arrangements with the Minnesota Department of Human Services.
- supporting federal legislative changes or waivers necessary to allow for direct procurement and full implementation of state County-Based Purchasing laws (Minn. Stat. § 256B.692).
- default assignment of enrollees to the county-based purchasing plan if an enrollee does not make a choice of health plan.

**4. Support SCORE Grants and End the General Fund Drain on the SWMT.** The establishment of the Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) in 1997 was intended to help state and local governments address waste management issues, but instead has been diverted over the years to the general fund for unrelated purposes. Increases to SWMT revenues have also not resulted in increased funding returned to counties, instead remaining mostly stagnant. Pope County urges the Legislature to end the draining of SWMT revenues to the general fund and instead support Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) grants to counties to address waste issues.

**5. Promote Child Care Availability to Benefit Local Families and Economies.** Pope County supports child care policies that promote the health and well-being of our children and community, maintain and grow our local workforce, and contribute to our economy and communities by assuring access to high quality, affordable, and safe child care. Pope County aims to attract and retain residents and employees in the community by supporting policies and programs to provide child care placements, through supports for current and new child care centers.

**6. Pope County also supports:** continued Border-to-Border Broadband Grant funding, increased PILT payments to counties; and preservation of local control related to cannabis licensure and land use issues.