



May 28, 2015

Mr. Denny Bennett
Minneapolis Swims
Board of Directors, President
2323 11th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Dear Mr. Bennett:

I am writing in support of the work that Minneapolis Swims is doing to restore the Phillips Aquatics Center and operate it for the benefit of the community. Projects like this align directly with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) mission “to protect, maintain and improve the health of all Minnesotans.”

MDH has prioritized health equity in all of its programs and activities. As part of my involvement with your project, I have learned that some neighborhoods in Minneapolis don’t have equal access to swimming facilities. All of the public pools serving the poorer neighborhoods in the city no longer exist. This is not the case in the more affluent neighborhoods. As a result, inequities exist in that residents in poorer neighborhoods have no exposure to swimming.

The environments in which people live have a major influence on choices they make about being physically active. Swimming is a physical activity with a multitude of benefits. I concur with Janet Evans, who in her 2007 book *Total Swimming*, summarized that “the benefits of swimming are numerous, significant and undeniable. Swimming can be beneficial to people across a broad range of ages and abilities: the very young to the very old, the very slow to the very fast, those with injuries or degenerative conditions, pregnant women, beginner to serious athletes and fitness buffs. Swimming positively affects many aspects of life, including physical, mental and emotional well-being.”

Another consideration that supports the need for this facility is the mobility of children and families across communities, especially in Minneapolis, which prides itself as the *City of Lakes*. Equal access to and the opportunity to participate in swimming education programs is critical and becomes a life-saving skill needed across the entire state.

The city of Minneapolis currently has no public indoor facility. Given that Minnesota has so few months that outdoor pools can actually be open due to our climate, it makes sense that at least one indoor pool be available.

MDH values collaboration within and across communities. It’s clear that this project is supported by a variety of government, corporate, foundation and private sources. I commend Minnesota Swims for gaining the support of so many and for building partnerships with the Minneapolis Parks and

Recreation Board, the Minneapolis School Board, the YWCA and Augsburg College. Those relationships strengthen the capacity and sustainability for a successful project.

I wish you the best as you move forward with your project. Know that the Minnesota Department of Health supports your efforts to increase physical activity opportunities through swimming for all Minneapolis citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward P. Ehlinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MSPH
Commissioner
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