



City of New Philadelphia

Joel B. Day, Mayor

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March 22, 2017

2nd District Representative Mark J. Romanchuk
Ohio House of Representatives
Chairman, Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Testimony Opposing the Mandate of Local Health Department Accreditation

Dear Chairman Romanchuk,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to Governor Kasich's effort to force municipal health departments in Ohio to become accredited by a Virginia-based public health accreditation organization.

As the mayor of the City of New Philadelphia and President of the New Philadelphia Board of Health, I have the responsibility to see that our Health Department is efficient and effective in delivering quality health services to all members of our community. New Philadelphia has a population of over 17,000 and is the county seat of Tuscarawas County, the northern most county in Eastern Ohio's Appalachian region. Many of our residents who depend upon the services of the Health Department are low income individuals and families who cannot afford health care. We provide immunizations, testing, health consultations and education, and environmental services that include food service inspections, mosquito control and disease prevention. More details on the services we provide are included in the testimony given to you by Vickie Ionno, Commissioner of the New Philadelphia Health Department.

Our Health Department is also on the front line of the battle to end opiate addiction in Tuscarawas County. It has the county's only Vivitrol program for heroin users trying to recover from their addictions. The program's outreach extends to the county jail, where incarcerated addicts can receive the first injection that puts them on a path to recovery. Our department also counsels, tests and refers clients for sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, and needle-sharing diseases such as hepatitis-C.

The New Philadelphia Health Department operates on an annual budget of around \$400,000. Per Vickie Ionno, New Philadelphia's Health Commissioner, the cost of mandated accreditation could be as high as \$300,000 in fees and personnel time. Unless the Ohio Legislature can provide the funding, accreditation is unaffordable. The forced closing of our health department would have a devastating effect on our local fight to end opiate addiction. May I remind you what Attorney General Mike Dewine stated in November of 2013, when he announced the formation of his Heroin Unit – quote – “Frankly, we have to fight this epidemic at the grassroots level, community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood...” – end quote. The New Philadelphia Health Department *is* at the grassroots level.

If this subcommittee and the Ohio Legislature wants to win the war against opiate addiction and make more health services available to the neediest residents of Ohio, keep local health departments open and help fund their services and programs. Make this a priority in the new budget. While you waste valuable time considering senseless state mandates like accreditation, more Ohioans are becoming hooked on heroin and dependence on local health departments grows because of the rising costs of federally mandated health insurance. Turn your focus on what's happening at the grassroots, on the front lines. We are fighting to save our communities and restore the health of our citizens. Every health department commissioner in Ohio can already tell you how to improve the quality of health services in our state. You don't need to send our tax dollars to Virginia to get those answers. As our representatives, you should be focusing on returning more state tax dollars to the local health departments in your districts. And Ohio's Director of Health should grab a helmet and join us on the front lines.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to share my concerns and thoughts with you, and the opportunity to defend the efforts of the New Philadelphia Health Department.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel B. Day". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Joel B. Day, Mayor

