



Proponent Testimony for House Bill 210

June 18, 2019

House Health Committee

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, I am Beth Schweitzer, Seneca County Health Commissioner and board member of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC). Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 210.

The control and eradication of communicable disease is one of the primary roles of the public health system. No one else in the health care system does that. Doing this job has only become more difficult as the world has become more mobile, with international travel becoming much more common. Commissioner Ingram provided the statistics regarding the seriousness of tuberculosis (TB) and the recent situation in his county that resulted in the proposed policy changes in HB 210. Unfortunately, this disease, once thought to be eradicated, has seen a return throughout Ohio, not just in our urban counties. During my five years as health commissioner in Seneca County we have fortunately had just two active cases of TB. However, even one case is too many, especially for the person with the disease as well as for their family. Also, as we are finding out with the drug resistant case we are currently following, just a single case of TB can be a tremendous strain on resources, both time and money. Because of its contagiousness, vigorous and proactive intervention, including contact tracing, is vital to stop the spread of this potentially deadly disease.

That is why this policy change is needed in Ohio – to allow the public health system to do its job to stop the spread of this disease. We cannot do our job in this regard without access to contact information for anyone who may have been exposed to the infected individual. It is important to note that all health districts are bound by HIPAA standards, which provide the necessary assurances that personal information will be protected from public disclosure and only used for the purpose of investigating the exposure to a communicable disease, for the limited purpose of preventing its spread and treating anyone who may have been exposed before any more serious illness occurs.

Public Health is also about prevention, the foundation of keeping our community members healthy– therefore, we are asking for TB skin testing to be required for day care workers that might be at risk of being exposed to TB, but only if they have recently emigrated from a country where TB is prevalent.

I ask for your favorable consideration of HB 210. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 210. I would be happy to answer any questions that members of the Committee may have.