



Ohio House of Representatives

State Representative Jason Stephens

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

House Bill 463 will improve accountability and transparency of general health districts in Ohio.

House Bill 463 does not change any of the duties or responsibilities of general health districts; however, the bill does change the board appointment process. The bill also adds a step in the budgetary process for general health districts. These slight changes in process will improve the trust of general health districts in our communities.

Board Appointments

In current law, board appointments to the county general health district are made by an often cumbersome process of the Advisory Council. This process requires only that one physician be on the board of health. If this Advisory Council does not meet then the Health Director may appoint members directly to the board.

House Bill 463 will give direct appointing authority to the board of county commissioners, and it will require that certain sectors of the community be represented on the general health district board. HB 463 requires the five-member board of health of a general health district to include a member to be a physician, a member representing the county commissioners, a member representing the township trustees, a member representing the municipal corporations, and a member representing the school districts located in the district.

Budget Review

In current law, the board of health of a general health district submits an appropriation measure (anticipated expenses) and an itemized estimate of revenue for the next fiscal year to the county auditor, who submits them to the county budget commission.

Once the county budget commission calculates the amount that is necessary to appropriate from the townships and municipal corporations located in the district, the county auditor appropriates those amounts. Essentially, Boards of Health set their own budget and get their funds from townships and municipalities without a vote of those townships or municipalities.

House Bill 463 adds the board of county commissioners (which is the appropriating authority of the county) into this process; the board of health would be required to submit the items directly to the board of county commissioners first. The commissioners then may approve or adjust the appropriation measure before certifying the budget to the county auditor.

Transparency Increases Trust

I strongly believe that the current cumbersome and confusing design of the local health departments' board appointment and budgeting processes contribute to distrust amongst some in the public. Unfortunately, this distrust undermines the goal of the local Health Department, which is to keep the citizens of Ohio safe and healthy.

As a former county commissioner, and as a former county auditor I have been in the unique position to see how a local board of health operates both administratively and fiscally.

I have sat on a health district advisory council. I have seen the budgeting process. Changing both of these processes will improve the

efficiency and the transparency of County Health Departments and therefore improve the public trust.

Thank you, again, Chairman Wiggam, for the opportunity to discuss this very important issue with your committee. I will be happy to take any questions from the committee.