

Opposition to HB 463

Dear Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, and Ranking Member Kelly,

My Name is Jim Hatfield, and I am a Trustee with Jefferson Township in Ross County. I also serve as the Chairman for the Ross County Health District Advisory Council (DAC). I am writing today to voice my concerns and opposition regarding HB 463.

The current system of making Board of Health appointments is not broken. In fact, the current system allows for many elected officials to have input on who serves on the Board of Health. Currently, in Ross County, our DAC consists of twenty-four elected officials which consists of every township, municipality, and a representative from the County Commissioners. *Under HB 463, the voices of these elected officials, and the voices of their constituents would be removed and given to the County Commissioners.*

Township Trustees and Village Mayors are often more aware of the needs of their constituents than the county wide elected county commissioners. The body and makeup of the DAC works to ensure that there is representation from every political subdivision. Changing the authority of who makes Board of Health appointments to a direct system of appointment from the county commissioners reduces oversight of the board and reduces input from other elected officials. This proposed change is unnecessary. Board of Health members should continue to be selected by representatives of all political subdivisions that are served by the health district.

Additionally, HB 463 takes away the voices of those that would fund the health district. Currently, the Ross County Health District is funded by a county wide levy. But should that levy fail, it is the townships and municipalities that would pay for the services of the health district. The County Commissioners contribute no funding and do not provide any inside millage to the health district. By moving the authority and oversight of the board of health, you are leaving the townships and municipalities to pay the bill with no authority or oversight of how those funds would be used.

The concerns that have been shared by the bill sponsor to the interested parties will in no way fix the issues at hand. These situations are governed by state rules, and the health departments must follow those rules to remain in compliance with state authority and mandates. HB 463 is placing a square peg in a round hole by trying to address one-off issues that are not present across the state and not fixable at the local political subdivision level. They are not fixable by eliminating the oversight of the DAC.

Lastly, I have heard concerns that the health department budget and board appointment process are not transparent. That is simply incorrect. These processes are already prescribed in statute and are conducted by locally elected officials. The DAC is a public body, and the meetings are open to the public. The budget of the health district is required to be submitted to the County Budget Commission for approval. Transparency and accountability are already built into these processes.

The current system for oversight and the appointment of board of health members is not broken. Most DAC bodies conduct business and exercise authority in a suitable fashion. The proposals in HB 463 are not necessary and would negatively impact those of us who are currently following the processes as outlined in the law. I urge you to vote no on HB 463.

Sincerely,
Jim Hatfield
Chairman of the Ross County Health District Advisory Council