



May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022

RE: Opponent to House Bill 463

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

I am Dr. Daniel Harpster, current President of the Auglaize County Board of Health. I have had the privilege of serving on the Board of Health for 17 years and I thank you for the opportunity to give testimony opposing House Bill 463.

Speaking on behalf of the Auglaize County Board of Health, we feel the removal of the District Advisory Council (DAC) to be a detrimental concept. Our DAC operates in accordance with all requirements and provides feedback and direction to the Health Department's operation. We take great pride in the ability to hear and address concerns from our county township representatives. Our township representatives have an open communication with our Health Commissioner and Board Members. It is very beneficial to have this working relationship and be aware of any issues going on at a local level.

House Bill 463 claims that the system for appointment of Board of Health members is flawed in some way and doesn't provide representation of its residents. Board of Health Members should be selected by the representatives of ALL political subdivisions served by the Board of Health, and not limited to a single township representative. The proposed required Board of Health members we feel opens the Health Department to more political agendas and could undermine health district operations.

Auglaize County Health Department operates on a levy and does not collect inside millage from our townships, but if we needed to, all townships should have an equal voice in how their funds are contributed and support the Board of Health. It doesn't seem justified to give this authority to the County Commissioners who do not contribute inside millage to the operations of our local health district.

Concerns have been brought up in previous testimony regarding state rules and programs the Health Department is required to follow, such as food service operations, home septic systems, and COVID-19 mandates. Auglaize County Health Department has prided itself on following the rules when required. We have not exceeded our authority or gone above State requirements. House Bill 463 will not resolve these issues at a local level. These are State requirements dictated by orders of the Governor and Director of Health, not by local rule.

The processes for our Board of Health Member appointment and budget approval are already public processes, we regularly have local media present at all of our meetings and the public is welcome to attend. The processes are prescribed in law and followed. Our budget is approved and verified by the County Auditor and we have yearly audits by the Auditor of State. State Audits are public record. We make every effort to operate transparently and strive to be wise stewards of our county supported funding. Consolidating the appointing and approval body to the County Commissioners does not increase accountability of the Board of Health nor the transparency of the processes and decisions of the Board of Health.

I thank you for this opportunity to voice the concerns from a smaller rural county. We have operated very well with our District Advisory Council and feel this proposed Bill will remove the local voice of the people and cause an undermining of Health Department operations.

Respectively submitted,

Daniel Harpster, DVM  
President  
Auglaize County Board of Health