

May 9, 2022

The Honorable Scott Wiggam, Chair
State and Local Government Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 463 Eliminate general health district advisory councils

Dear Chair Wiggam:

On behalf of the Morrow County Township Association and the Morrow County Health District Advisory Council, we are writing to express our opposition to House Bill 463, that would eliminate general health district advisory councils and transfer the appointing authority to the board of county commissioners.

Currently, appointment of members to the board of the general health district is given to an advisory council composed of one representative from each township and one from each municipal corporation composing the general health district. In Morrow County, this amounts to potentially 23 members of the appointing authority as opposed to a three-member board of county commissioners. This larger body inherently provides for a more direct representation of the residents of the district as well as a broader diversity of ideas and solutions.

Additionally, general health districts are funded, in part, through appropriations made to the townships and municipal corporations composing the district. Without budget oversight and board appointing authority over health districts, townships would lose their voice in the budgeting and appropriations process.

We in Morrow County have experienced the potential risks of consolidating appointing and budgeting power into the hands of a few individuals. In 2018, the board of county commissioners decided to increase the amount of rent charged for space provided to the general health district. When the health district did not agree to pay the increased amount, the commissioners informed the department they would need to move to an alternate location comprising half the space, inadequate facilities in the exam rooms, and lacking ADA-compliant access for patients. Ultimately, the commissioners and the board of health entered into an agreement for the rent and passed the increased amount to the townships and municipalities through their appropriations. Essentially, the board of county commissioners redirected apportioned monies to fund county deficits. Eliminating district advisory councils and consolidating all appointing and budgeting authority to the board of county commissioners could have a negative financial impact on township budgets and the residents that pay for and rely on township governmental services.

Townships are the most local form of government in Ohio. As trustees, we are best positioned to understand the needs and concerns of our residents. As non-partisan elected officials, we are entrusted to improve the infrastructure, safety, and health of our residents using their tax dollars. It is vital that townships continue to have a voice in the operations of the health district, oversight of their budgeting process, and appointing authority of members to the board of health. As such, the members of the Morrow County Township Association and the Morrow County General Health District Advisory Council oppose House Bill 463 as currently written.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. Should you have any questions or concerns about our position, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectively submitted,

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Morrow County Township Association
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Lynn Shinaberry, Chairperson
Morrow County Health District Advisory Council
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