



Testimony before the
Senate Finance Committee

House Bill 110

Jun 2, 2021

Senator Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Joe Mazzola. I currently serve as Health Commissioner with Franklin County Public Health (FCPH), and President of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC), the state association representing Ohio's 113 local health departments. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding House Bill 110, the state biennial budget bill, specifically the changes offered in the substitute bill accepted by your committee yesterday. I would like to speak to three issues of most concern to local health departments.

City Health Districts

The bill currently requires each city with a population less than 50,000 served by a board of health of a city health district to complete a study evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of merging with the general health district that includes the city. AOHC believes this amendment to be duplicative of the existing requirement to become nationally accredited and is therefore unnecessary. However, if the General Assembly wishes for this proposal to remain in the bill, AOHC respectfully asks that city health districts that meet this definition but are nationally accredited or have applied to become accredited would be exempt; And for cities contracting for public health services under ORC 3709.08 with their general health district (e.g., Franklin, Cuyahoga and Hamilton Counties) that they too would also be exempt. It's our judgement accredited health departments who have objectively

demonstrated their effectiveness and value while contracting with cities should retain their ability to contract.

An additional concern related to this proposal is the removal of \$6 million from the budget of the Ohio Department of Health, which was designated in part to pay for the feasibility studies required in the proposal. This change results in the transfer of all the costs of these feasibility studies to the local boards of health required to conduct the studies.

This additional funding was also intended to promote alignment of public health priorities at the state and local level, and to support the assessment and planning process that inform those priorities, and evaluate progress toward addressing health disparities. Our state's public health system is aligned towards common priorities - addressing such issues as communicable disease, emergency preparedness, infant and maternal mortality, chronic disease, mental health and addiction and access to care. In order for Ohio to make any meaningful progress on these public health measures, funding is essential.

Definition and Regulation of Vaping Products

AOHC supports the original provisions in HB 110 that added vaping products to the definition of nicotine products, with consideration of meaningful enforcement. We are concerned about the removal of these provisions, as well as the additional exemption provided for Ohioans to vape in vape shops. Vaping presents a significant public health threat to our citizens. Our young people are at especially higher risk of vaping, which has shown to be even more addictive than regular tobacco use. Therefore, we request that the original provisions related to vaping be reinserted in the bill.

Multi-County Health District Levy Authority:

AOHC has consistently expressed its longstanding support of this option to facilitate local mergers as identified by the local community. We would ask the Ohio Senate adopt an amendment to modify the version of the proposal originally offered by the administration to allow for the placement of the initial levy on the ballot prior to the finalization of any multi-county health district merger, in order to assure there is a mechanism to fund the newly created district. This is the same mechanism that exists for multi-county ADAMH boards.

AOHC has been proactively working for decades to modernize our public health system in Ohio, with the goals of enhanced data and IT infrastructure, alignment of public health priorities, increased administrative efficiencies, and improved overall system performance. We look forward to continuing that dialogue with ODH, Governor DeWine and the State Legislature.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.