



City of New Philadelphia, Ohio
New Philadelphia Health District

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02 JUNE 2021

House Bill 110- SENATE TESTIMONY
New Philadelphia City Health District
Dana Fischio, MBA, EHST, Accreditation Coordinator

Senator Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Senate Health Committee regarding HB 110. My name is Dana Fischio. I am the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) Accreditation Coordinator for New Philadelphia City Health Department and an environmental health specialist in training. But I also have another title: Kent State University College of Public Health student. This is the role I am writing from first when I describe the unintended consequences this bill will have should it pass as it is currently written.

In the last few days and weeks, we have heard many financial terms related to a possible merger of city and county health departments and that one benefit of such mergers would be to incentivize operational efficiencies. I would like to briefly emphasize another financial term that is on most balance sheets but difficult to quantify and that is Intangible Assets- The intangible assets I would like to describe to each of you are in the form of education and real-world experience.

Over the past several years, New Philadelphia City Health Department has hosted several public health college interns, me being one of them. During my internship I was exposed to the many facets of public health: environmental health, vital stats, epidemiology, disease investigation and so many more functions. In speaking with my classmates, it is rare that a public health intern would have this much exposure to the various aspects of a local health department and, quite frankly, they are jealous. My classmates are usually sequestered to a singular function when they accept internships with local health departments and while this is important, it is of a narrow focus and rarely represents the entirety of the public health discipline.

In short, New Philadelphia City Health Department is training the next generation of public health practitioners. If local boards of health and their city health departments are abolished, these learning opportunities and their intangible benefits will be lost. It is my belief that future public health students will not be afforded the same learning experiences should mergers happen.

Additionally, I would like to briefly outline the national accreditation process for New Philadelphia City Health Department. To start, the mission of PHAB is to “Advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, strong infrastructure, and innovation”.



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Furthermore, accreditation does the following:

- Promotes high performance and continuous quality improvement;
- Recognizes high performers that meet nationally accepted standards of quality and improvement;
- Illustrates health department accountability to the public and policymakers;
- Increases the visibility and public awareness of governmental public health, leading to greater public trust and increased health department credibility, and ultimately a stronger constituency for public health funding and infrastructure; and
- Clarifies the public's expectations of health departments.

New Philadelphia City Health Department is well into the accreditation process, with a completion date of 28 AUG 2021. From there, PHAB will examine our submitted documents and schedule a site visit before a final determination of our accreditation status.

Similarly, a feasibility study is an assessment of the practicality of a proposed project and evaluates whether the project is financially and technically viable. With the stated purpose of PHAB accreditation, I struggle to understand what a feasibility study would uncover that accreditation would not. In fact, New Philadelphia has already spent \$275,000 on the accreditation process, a dollar figure that is not insignificant by any means. It is jarring to think that New Philadelphia would have wasted \$275,000 in taxpayer money should a forced merger occur. Moreover, as financial support for New Philadelphia City Health Department is largely based on local funds, I strongly believe that decisions about the delivery of local public health services should be up to the City of New Philadelphia and its residents.

To this end, I humbly request the language in HB 110 requiring city health departments whose jurisdiction serve a population less than 50,000 residents undergo a feasibility study and subsequent possible forced merger be removed from the bill.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration on this matter of great importance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dana Fischio'.

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