



City of New Philadelphia, Ohio
New Philadelphia Health District

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HB110 – SENATE TESTIMONY

New Philadelphia City Health District
Vickie Ionno RN, Health Commissioner

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

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak to the Senate Finance Committee about HB110 and the language that will impact city health districts with less than 50,000 residents like New Philadelphia. My name is Vickie Ionno and I am the Health Commissioner for the New Philadelphia City Health District.

Established in 1854, New Philadelphia City Health District (NPCHD) is one of the oldest in Ohio and is located in New Philadelphia, the county seat of Tuscarawas County. It is the county's largest city with a population of over 17,000. For over 167 years we have led the fight to prevent disease and promote the health and wellness of our residents and the surrounding areas including responding to the 1918 Pandemic. Many of our clients do not have reliable transportation and walk to our health department to access medical services. Our health department is located within walking distance of our Homeless Shelter and Recovery Houses. Since our county has no public transportation, closure of our health department would increase barriers for clients to receive services and decrease their access to care.

With a staff of 7, New Philadelphia City Health Department is small, but mighty. In 2019 our health department provided over 16,000 public health services. Since March of 2020, the beginning of the Global Pandemic, we stepped up to meet the multitude of demands, orders and directives issued from the state health department and Governor's office. During the shut-down and closures, our health department continued to safely provide essential services while managing positive cases, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine of our residents.

Many of our Environmental Health services include inspections of food services, schools, jails, swimming pools and tattoo establishments. Other services included mosquito spraying, enforcement of environmental regulations, investigation of unsafe/unsanitary housing and following-up on any foodborne illnesses. Some that are not offered by our county health department.

In 2019 our health department provided 3,107 Vital Stats services that included filing birth and death certificates, issuing certified copies and burial permits.

Clinical services provided include health education, vaccinating children and adults, providing free HIV, Hepatitis C and Alc testing, blood pressure checks, Medication Assistant Treatment (MAT) with Vivitrol and now administering COVID-19 vaccinations. All vaccinations are followed-up with timely reporting via data input to Ohio Department of Health.

Since the end of December 2020 to-date our health department is one of 14 providers and has administered 5,150 or over 18% of the all COVID vaccines given in Tuscarawas County. Our hard-working staff committed to long hours to meet the needs of our residents without complaint. We set up



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drive-in clinics every Thursday at our city park. A location that allowed residents to remain in their car, complete their paperwork, receive their COVID vaccine and wait 15 minutes to be observed by our staff in case of an adverse event. This safe location prevented the possibility of viral spread in this outdoor environment and allowed our health department to logistically process a larger number of clients in less time. It also accommodated our residents, especially our seniors that were at risk for falling during the harsh weather.

In addition to our park location, we set up many at off-site locations to provide COVID vaccines. Our department vaccinated all three New Philadelphia school district educators and staff in one day. In addition to vaccination clinics at our health department, other off-site COVID vaccination clinics include the Tuscarawas County Board of DD, Friends of the Homeless, Recovery Houses, Hospice House, many medical providers offices, Sheriff's Office, Gradall Industries, Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, Cooper-Standard and Buehlers Foods to name a few.

Community involvement is important as New Philadelphia City Health Department staff sits on many community and governing boards like Family and Children First Council, Addiction Task Force, Anti-Drug Coalition, New Philadelphia Municipal Recover Court, HIV Regional Advisory Group, Healthy Tusc, Access Tusc, Regional Planning and Subdivision, Flood Plains Appeals Board, Solid Waste District Policy Committee, Tusc. Solid Waste Board of Supervisors and Local Work Group, Local Emergency Planning Committee (only member from a health agency), Tusc Partners and more.

Some services are only provided by our health department. One service that our health department spear-headed in 2015 was being the first site in Tuscarawas County that stepped up to provide Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) called Vivitrol for residents diagnosed with Opiate Dependence in Tuscarawas County. We work closely with the ADAMHS Board, area Courts and Counselors, Probation Offices and our County Jail to coordinate treatment services. Since 2015 we have administered 1,161 doses of Vivitrol and have seen many clients successfully complete 24 months of treatment and recover. It truly takes a "village".

To this end I will respectfully request that the language in House Bill 110 requiring health departments in cities under 50,000 undergo a feasibility study and possible forced merger be changed for Health Departments that are Nationally Accredited or in process of Accreditation.

Our health department is currently pursuing National Accreditation. We have applied to PHAB, hired an Accreditation Coordinator who is uploading the required documents that are due by August 26, 2021. In our opinion this intensive examination of our department required by National Accreditation should prove our "efficiency and effectiveness". Please consider striking this language from HB110 that puts this additional hardship on small city health departments. We should not be judged by the size of our jurisdiction but for the positive health impact we have on our residents.

Sincerely,

Vickie Ionno RN, Health Commissioner
New Philadelphia City Health District



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