

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Dr. Beth Canfield-Simbro, and I am an associate professor of health education at the University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio and a member of the Board of Health for the Alliance City Health Department.

I would like to urge removal of a provision added in the Substitute version of HB 110 that impacts local boards of health. The provision is listed in the comp doc as DOHCD40. Under the amendment, cities with populations of less than 50,000 residents who have a city health board would be required to abolish that board and have those services transferred to the county health board.

I am opposed to this amendment for a number of reasons. My local health department is largely funded by local tax dollars, and a state requirement to eliminate services for smaller communities seems unnecessarily intrusive. Local control of locally funded public health departments is essential to provide quality care and best use of said tax dollars.

Elimination/merger of our local health department would reduce access to necessary health care for many residents in our city. Alliance struggles with higher poverty rates; around 90% of our local schoolchildren are eligible for free/reduced price lunch. Many residents do not have access to reliable transportation that would allow them to travel outside the city for public health services. It can take up to 2.5 hours by bus to travel from Alliance to Canton, and frankly, many residents will forego immunizations and WIC services if they can not walk to the city health department to receive them.

In addition, our local public health department has been amazing during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have offered guidance to our local businesses, schools, and the University of Mount Union. These important partnerships that have been built and strengthened by the pandemic matter to our community. Our county health department is fantastic, but it is not a replacement for a local health department for a community with a high poverty rate. Our community values the Alliance City Health Department for its location, services, and dedicated staff.