

May 4, 2021

Ohio State Senate Health Committee
Senator Stephen A. Huffman, Chair

Dear Senate Health Committee Member:

As an active participant in the field of public health, I am writing to you regarding House Bill 110; where it states that any local health department that serves fewer than 50,000 in total population could possibly be eliminated (with actual clear-cut criteria not provided).

During the past year, our state and nation has endured the pain and struggles of a global pandemic. Each local health department (especially in Ohio) has had to quickly implement the best plans possible; with little funding and support; to ensure that all citizens within their respected jurisdictions, are kept safe and informed.

I am in a unique position in my community as I work with the Alliance City Health Department (as the Accreditation Coordinator) and as an Adjunct Instructor at the University of Mount Union. Since the pandemic started, I served as the main COVID-19 responder and liaison between the university and the health department. The Alliance City Health Department plays a larger role in this community; than just a local health agency that provides traditional services. If it were not for our partnership and guidance, the institution may not have stayed open for in-person classes and larger outbreaks could have occurred.

When it came to my attention that local health departments may be cut; I could not believe it. Each local health department and the city/town that it resides in, should be able to decide if they can govern efficiently or not. I have worked with three different health departments within Stark County, and each serves their respected jurisdictions, and each community is evidently different. As the Accreditation Coordinator, the Alliance City Health Department and staff have tirelessly worked, not only to go through the rigorous accreditation process, but have dedicated so much of their time and energy to protect everyone they serve.

As a citizen, public health professional and dedicated Ohioan, I am requesting that you reconsider this bill and remove all language that could possibly eliminate local health departments.

Best regards,

Leslie M. Shaffer, MPH, ABD