

May 9, 2022



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

House State and Local Government
Honorable Chairman Wiggam
77 South High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215.

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Please find below testimony in opposition of the provisions in HB 463 as it relates to the function of District Advisory Councils in appointing members to local boards of health.

In Hamilton County, our District Advisory Council is active and anxiously conducts its annual business. The Hamilton County Council represents the jurisdictions we serve and completes the annual tasks of appointing members to the Board of Health and approving contracts and fees for the jurisdictions for which we conduct public health services. The Council views each of these tasks with the utmost of respect, as the decisions made at annual Council meetings affect the entire County for the year.

It is incumbent upon our process to solicit and encourage input from all of the political jurisdictions served by Hamilton County Public Health. The input of the jurisdictions to these crucial functions ensures transparency and participation of all entities affected by Council decisions – not just a single political entity. County commissioners contribute no inside millage to operations of local health districts and as such, district advisory councils’ decisions are critical to maintain adequate and transparent decision-making functions.

HB 463 seeks to resolve local issues concerning State rules governing delegated State programs – most particularly, the mandates enacted and enforced by the Governor and Ohio Health Director. This bill as submitted, will not resolve these issues.

Finally, it is important to note that appointments to the Board of Health and the budget approval process currently legislated and carried out by district advisory councils are very transparent processes. In Hamilton County, our annual meeting is publicly noticed; during the pandemic, we enabled remote participation to ensure the Council’s business would remain active and transparent. In addition, it is equally important to note that appointments to our Board of Health are not necessarily a “rubber stamp,” as the process always includes thorough review of the qualifications of prospective board members and can sometimes result in a competitive process.

As Hamilton County Health Commissioner, I urge you to leave intact the current system codified as continuing the representation of a district advisory council in forming boards of health and approving health department fees for jurisdictional service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Kesterman", is written over a circular stamp.

Greg Kesterman
Health Commissioner
Hamilton County Public Health