

**QUINNIPIACK VALLEY HEALTH DISTRICT
1151 HARTFORD TURNPIKE
NORTH HAVEN, CT 06473**

**Appropriations Committee Budget Hearing
Friday, February 20, 2009**

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for being here for us today. My name is Leslie Balch, and I am the Director of Health for the Quinnipiack Valley Health District, a regional health department serving approximately 97,000 residents in the towns of Bethany, Hamden, North Haven, and Woodbridge.

I applaud the State's consideration of "regionalization with financial incentives" as a strategy to contain costs in these hard economic times. Operating a Health District over the past 17 years has demonstrated the cost effectiveness of a centralized, regional authority to provide public health services. The member towns benefit from economy of scale, coordinated service, shared expertise and decreased administrative costs.

On first read, the proposed legislative changes (Governor's Bill # 847) for regionalizing health departments in CT has: **DECREASED** the financial incentive of belonging to a health district by decreasing the funding from the current \$2.08 per capita to \$1.25 per capita; threatened to disband seven currently organized health districts due to the new definition requiring a minimum number of residents and more than two participating towns; pulled funding away from municipal health districts without giving them a financial incentive to join or form a "regional health department" and decreased the funding to already struggling health districts by 60% - a level which threatens our existence.

As a strong supporter of the regional concept, I am discouraged by this disincentive to regionalize public health. This proposal represents the lowest reimbursement to health districts in the State of Connecticut since before 1985 and serves to discourage regionalization and decrease, both in quality and quantity, services to Connecticut residents. The projected savings (\$2.6 million in FY10 and \$2.8 million in FY11) from the regionalization of local health departments in the Governor's budget is not a function of restructuring, but the direct result of funding and service cuts.

It saddens me to see the Smart Growth Working Group's well-intentioned recommendations so twisted as to discourage support from the public health community, cut municipal funding and ignore protection for our communities.

Thank you.
Leslie Balch, Director of Health