



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
REGARDING S.B. 847
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PUBLIC HEALTH**

Public Health Committee

March 6, 2009

I would like to thank Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to address the committee today regarding S.B. 847, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Public Health. My name is Joan Segal and I am President of the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA). CPHA strongly opposes the proposed cut in funding to local public health departments. The CPHA urges the legislature to maintain funding to local public health departments, which protects our resident's from disease, promotes health, safety and prevention programs and policies, and prepares our communities for potential emergencies.

Local public health departments provide invaluable services, including restaurant inspections, permit approvals, health promotion activities, prevention initiatives and education, and environmental health protections. These services help to protect the health and well-being of all Connecticut residents. The current state per capita(per person) funding for local health departments in Connecticut is \$5,347,208.98, approximately \$1.65 per person. This funding helps to provide full-time public health services for 93% of the state's population.

Under the Governor's proposed budget, per capita grand funds for local public health departments will be cut 44%. This proposal would eliminate all per capita funding for the 31 full-time municipal health departments that serve 1,678,785 Connecticut state residents (47.8% of the state's population). It will also eliminate seven of the current 20 health districts because the bill defines "regional health departments" as serving three or more municipalities and a population of more than 50,000. These seven health districts serve 391,814 residents (11.2% of the state's population). In addition, funding for "regional health departments" will be decreased to \$1.25 per person, a reduction of 40% for towns with a population greater than 50,000 and a reduction of 49% for towns with a population less than 50,000. The proposal will provide no funding for the 34 part-time health departments in the state.

This cut will have grave implications for local public health programs. Local health departments are already challenged to provide the public health protections that Connecticut residents demand and deserve. This cut would decimate existing local public health services and programs, negatively affecting the state's health and well-being. Without adequate funding, local health departments will have to lay off trained public health professionals, including sanitarians, inspectors, public health nurses, and health educators. In addition, health departments will be forced to reduce or eliminate important programs. This could have a disastrous effect on health. Local health department will not have the staff to conduct restaurant inspections as required by state law, increasing the risk of food borne outbreaks. Disease outbreaks may go unrecognized or spread out of control due to delays in communicable disease investigation and follow-up. Health

inspections that ensure the safety of the water and the absence of lead poisoning threat will be delayed or decreased. As a result, health departments cannot ensure that child daycare facilities used by residents will be safe. Finally, lack of follow-up on community complaints regarding rats, and poorly maintained swimming pools will put the public at an increased risk of West Nile Virus, Lyme disease, rabies and other diseases.

CPHA urges the Committee to fully fund local health departments. The consequences of not doing so put the health and safety of our children and all Connecticut residents at risk and will cost the state considerably more in the long run.

The Connecticut Public Health Association wishes to thank the Committee for its invaluable leadership in addressing the public health needs of Connecticut's citizens. For additional information on CPHA's position on local public health funding or other public health issues, contact CPHA's Campaign Director Annamarie Beaulieu at annamarie.beaulieu@cpha.info; 860.301.8857, or CPHA's Advocacy Committee Co-Chair Alyssa Norwood at Alyssa.norwood@gmail.com; 860.424.1345.

Source: Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, Inc.