

**TESTIMONY OF**  
**CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION**  
**REGARDING**  
**H.B. 5618**

**An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Council to Promote Enhanced Communication  
Between State and Local Public Health Officials.**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH**  
**March 2, 2011**

Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Alison Gilcreast. I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Public Health Association where I serve as an intern for the Advocacy Committee, as part of my Graduate studies in Public Health. The Connecticut Public Health Association is pleased to endorse House Bill 5618, which would implement a council within the Department of Public Health to strengthen consultation, planning, cooperation and communication among state and local public health departments by giving local public health directors input on important emerging public health issues.

The Connecticut Public Health Association's (CPHA) mission is to represent and unite the diverse expertise of Connecticut's public health professionals, to ameliorate the most pressing public health issues in the state, and to promote health and safe living for the people of Connecticut. [1] Therefore, CPHA is thrilled about the establishment of a council within the Department of Public Health that will enhance collaboration between state and local public health professionals.

**Background**

One goal of Healthy People 2020, which sets health priorities for the nation, is to ensure that federal, state, tribal, and local health agencies have the necessary infrastructure to effectively provide essential public health services. [2] According to the Department of Health and Human Services, one priority area is improved public health infrastructure. [3] H. B. 5618 is a step in the right direction, because it encourages interdependence among the state department of public health and all local health departments and districts.

The limited resources available to local health departments and districts make it challenging for them to meet public health threats such as chronic diseases, food borne illness, and infectious diseases like H1N1. Chronic diseases are responsible for 7 of 10 deaths each year among Americans, and account for 75 percent of the nation's health spending. [2] The collaboration that would result from HB 5618 could be a cost-effective way to deal with public health threats into the future by promoting information sharing, reducing duplicative services, and providing a forum for addressing strengths and weaknesses.

## Recommendations

One of CPHA's legislative priorities during this session is strengthening Connecticut's public health infrastructure. Therefore we support the following aspects of HB 5618:

- The establishment of an advisory committee to increase collaboration and communication between state and local governmental public health;
- Collaborative processes whereby the advisory committee can review and comment on allocation of public health resources, and changes to and implementation of public health policies;
- Allocation of fiscal resources to support the administration of the advisory committee and its work; and
- Participation of local health, under the auspices of the advisory committee, in applications for and distribution of federal grants

In conclusion, we strongly urge you to consider HB 5618 and its potential contributions to strengthening Connecticut's public health infrastructure.

For additional information on CPHA's position on the local public health infrastructure and other public health issues, please contact Kathy Lewis at 860-768-5464, e-mail [kalewis@hartford.edu](mailto:kalewis@hartford.edu) or Alison Gilcreast at 860-395-9202, e-mail [sailing395@comcast.net](mailto:sailing395@comcast.net)

## References

1. Connecticut Public Health Association. (2011). Mission. Retrieved from <http://www.cpha.info/index.cfm>
2. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008, October 28). Healthy People 2020. Phase I Report Executive Summary: Recommendations for the Framework and Format for Healthy People 2020. Secretary's Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.healthypeople.gov/HP2020/advisory/PhaseI/PhaseI.pdf>
3. Honoré, P.A., & Scott, W. (2010). *Priority areas for improvement of quality in public health*. Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/initiatives/quality/quality/improvequality2010.pdf>