

## Connecticut Association of Directors of Health

*Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 5528: An Act Concerning Essential Public Health Services*  
To the Distinguished Co-Chairs, Senator Gerratana and Representative Johnson,  
and Members of the Public Health Committee  
March 17, 2014

Good afternoon, my name is Jennifer Kertanis, Director of Health for the Farmington Valley Health District serving 110,000 people in the towns of Avon, Canton, Barkhamsted, Colebrook, Simsbury, Farmington, Hartland, New Hartford, Granby and East Granby. I have worked in the field of public health in Connecticut for more than 25 years at the state and local level. I am here today to urge you to support Raised Bill 5528, *An Act Concerning Essential Public Health Service*. This bill is necessary to replace the existing antiquated language regarding local public health and to more accurately reflect what every resident should expect of their local health department while aligning these expectations with the national standard.

Local health departments are responsible for **preventing** disease outbreaks, **promoting** policies that support good health and **protecting** residents from public health emergencies. The ten essential services reflect the activities, skills and capabilities required to effectively and efficiently accomplish this mission. Local health department routinely monitor the health status of their communities and diagnose and investigate health problems, a critical component to effectively and swiftly preventing disease outbreaks and public health emergencies. Providing health education and working with community partners is done routinely to promote healthy behaviors and policies in an effort to curb the rise in preventable disease. Local health departments enforce the public health code and local regulations designed to protect the public from food-borne illness and environmental threats that adversely impact the public's health. Emerging infections, the challenges of chronic disease and evolving science demand that local health departments stay current with the latest research and engage routine workforce development. These are the activities articulated in the 10 essential services. These are the activities of an effective and efficient local health department.

Adoption of the ten essential services is not a new concept, but one that is overdue. In fact, in 2010 a Governor's Task Force comprised of state and local health officials, municipal officials, CCM, COST and other public health organizations recommended the adoption of the 10 essential services to define the work of local public health.

Failure to modernize public health law means that we continue to operate under a set of antiquated expectations that most local health departments cannot or do not fulfill. In addition, not referencing this nationally recognized framework may impede local health departments who seek to achieve voluntary accreditation.

Taking action now more clearly defines the work of local public health, increasing accountability to the residents we serve while eliminating outdated mandates. Further, it supports pursuit of voluntary accreditation which ultimately may position us for additional federal funding.

Thank you for considering this simple yet important step in enhancing our local public health system.