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Testimony on HB 5528 An Act Concerning Essential Public Health Services

By Senator Toni Boucher

March 17, 2014

Chairman Gerratana, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Welch, Ranking Member Srinivasan, and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 5528 AN ACT CONCERNING ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES.

Currently, the statutes authorize the Department of Public Health to provide state funding to a local health department, provided that the department is responsible for a population of at least 50,000, or serves three or more municipalities. This bill would further mandate that a local health department provide essential public health services in order to qualify for certain funds. In doing so, HB 5528 will require local health departments to provide more comprehensive and higher quality health services. This is a laudable goal and one that will enhance the health and wellbeing of the general public.

However, as directed in Section 3 subsection (8) of this bill, local health departments will have to assure "the existence of a competent workforce of health care professionals." The term "health care professional" as it is currently used in statute is associated with a wide variety of professions licensed by the state and includes MDs, RNs, LPNs, chiropractors, dentists, APRNs, acupuncturists, and massage therapists among many others.

Local healthcare officials have contacted me out of concern that this would be an impossibly wide scope of services for a health department to take responsibility for. If the term "health care professionals" could be changed to "public health professionals" it would make the requirements of this bill more manageable for local health departments while still holding them to a higher standard.

Thank you for your time and consideration.