**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, distinguished co-chairs and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Charles Brown, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH). CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of the Directors of Health from each of Connecticut's 74 local health departments. Local health directors serve as the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and ensure the provision of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut

On behalf of the Association, I am submitting testimony in support of HB 5528 - *An Act Concerning Essential Public Health Services* because as public health professionals, we believe local public health services within the state of Connecticut should be aligned with the public health standards now being utilized at a national level. Connecticut's local public health departments are currently operating under obsolete regulations that could make it harder to access federal funds in the future and do not accurately describe the work actually being done by local health officials. Proposed HB 5528 would modernize Connecticut public health law to reflect the nationally recognized framework which has been in existence since 1994 that describes what public health is, clarifies the position of "Public Health" within the health care system itself and outlines the functions and services local public health departments should be providing.

By aligning the work of local public health departments with the national standard, we position our state to readily access federal funding in the future and assist our public health agencies to become accredited through the voluntary public health accreditation process. This nationally recognized accreditation process is based upon the same essential public health services outlined in the proposed bill and by framing local public health services in Connecticut in the same way we will provide our departments with a strong foundation as they seek this recognition of their programs.

While the language outlined within HB 5528 is generally aligned with the language from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Essential Service #8 has been changed in the bill language to read "*assuring the existence of a competent workforce of* ***health care professionals***" instead of "*assure a competent* ***public health and personal care workforce***". This is a critical change which is well outside the purview of local health departments since they do not have oversight for the health care professionals within their jurisdictions. Local Directors of Health work diligently to ensure that their workforce comprised of public health professionals such as sanitarians and public health nurses, is prepared for the challenges that they face today and in the future.

Connecticut's local public health departments work every day to prevent disease by promoting safe communities and a healthy environment to all residents and visitors, while upholding public health based regulations that protect the quality of life. Passage of HB 5528 would assist them in their efforts today and in the future. Thank you for your consideration.

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