

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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Acting Commissioner

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Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee Testimony

Raul Pino

Commissioner of Public Health

February 25, 2016

Good afternoon, Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor, and other distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Dr. Raul Pino I am here in front of you, as Governor Malloy's nominee for the position of Commissioner for the Department of Public Health. I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity given to me by Governor Malloy to lead the Department of Public Health. Please allow me to present my qualifications.

First, I have extensive knowledge of epidemiological method and theory from both academic and practical perspectives. Going back to when I was still a medical student at the University of Havana, Cuba, I completed courses in research methods, epidemiology, biostatistics, and microbiology as part of the coursework that culminated in an MD in 1987. My clinical training in Cuba also included public health as part of the continuum of care, from the population level to individualized care, giving me a unique perspective to effectively lead the DPH.

During my work for the Cuban Armed Forces (1987-1990), as medical chief, I was responsible for a 250-bed hospital and 11 satellite clinics. I directed and managed 200 professional and service staff, and developed and implemented programs for the military and surrounding communities. This unique skill which was acquired during this time, has helped me when planning for emergency preparedness, when responding to natural disasters, and when planning for other large events.

After leaving Cuba in 1995, I continued my career in health at Harford Hospital (HH) as a Patient Care Assistant (PCA). This job was a humbling experience for a young surgeon and taught me the importance of each individual's contribution to the team. After a year at HH, I moved to the Hispanic Health Council and a year later to The Institute for Community



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Research in Hartford. In both instances, I worked as a Community Outreach Worker on programs aimed at prevention and health research. This experience gave me the best crash course anyone can have on diversity, ethnic structure and the role of socio-economics on health outcomes, what we call today social determinants of health. The research experience gained at both institutions gave me the analytical skills to better understand health disparities and to engage stakeholders in a participatory process to achieve common goals.

From 2007 to 2010, I was an Epidemiologist for the HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases sections for the Connecticut Department of Public Health. During this period, I was responsible for the statewide program implementation, data collection, and management on HIV/STD prevention. I was also charged with a statewide gonorrhea surveillance project funded by the CDC. Results from this work were published in November 2011, by the American Journal of Public Health.

After leaving DPH in 2010 I was appointed as the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the City of Hartford. I was responsible for the daily management of five Divisions with approximately 100 staff members; a \$14,000,000 annual budget; and improving the quality of life and health outcomes of approximately 125,000 city residents as well as those who work and visit Hartford. I worked to increase both individual and program-level accountability among the health department staff. I placed great emphasis on committing to improve the quality of the duty in which the health department was charged.

I also began the process that firmly signaled Hartford's commitment to the health of its people by seeking national accreditation via the Public Health Accreditation Board for a local health department. This prior experience has been critical in helping to be an active player in DPH's efforts to obtain national accreditation initiated under Dr. Mullen's leadership. DPH has completed the three prerequisites for accreditation - a State Health Needs Assessment, a departmental Strategic Plan, and the State Health Improvement Plan. These prerequisites helped clarify DPH's vision that a healthier CT is attained through increased community partnerships with hospitals and clinics, non-profit and community-based organizations, and community action groups.

I have experience in quality improvement systems in which service level data as well as health outcome data is reported to me and shared with the appropriate program managers on a quarterly basis. Through consistent monitoring of program processes and health outcomes, the department is better positioned to adjust service levels and personnel in order to deliver the most comprehensive level of care. In addition to providing insight to the agency, program metrics and outcome data are easily accessible to the public and requesting agencies.

I am a firm believer that trying to improve long-term population health by addressing social inequalities is crucial for positive outcomes to last, and it is our duty as community health leaders to seize these opportunities when presented.

When leading a team through uncharted waters, there is no roadmap on what to do. Everything is uncertain, and the higher the risk, the higher the pressure. That is when a leader's natural intuition and ability to process information and input quickly can greatly benefit the organization. Guiding my team through the process of day-to-day tasks can be honed down to a science through discipline, structure, and consistency; but when something unexpected occurs, or the organization is thrown into a new scenario, I am confident that I can serve as the guiding force. I not only draw instinctively on my past experiences but also naturally assess the resources that are readily available or could be sought out to support my efforts. I embrace making tough decisions in these critical moments and trust that the values-based foundation I have provides the necessary support to manage and lead my organization.

The transition from overseeing the Hartford HHS to leading DPH might be perceived by many to be a giant leap when considering the many differences between positions. My life, however, has been full of giant leaps – from the farms lands of rural Cuba to Havana; from civilian life to Medical Chief in the Army; from the Army to detention as a political prisoner, from Cuba to New England, from the street of Hartford as an outreach worker to the Deputy Commissioner of Public Health. While finding success on the other side of these daunting leaps could not have been possible without the help of others, these major life changes affirmed my abilities to adapt, lead, and rise to those and any future challenges. My extensive background covering the diverse field of public health and beyond makes me a strong candidate for the Commissioner position. I am looking forward to working with each and every one of you.

Thank you for giving me the time to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.