



**Connecticut Department of Public Health**

**Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee**

**March 2, 2016**

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.  
860-509-7101**

**House Bill 5457 - AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICTS AND HEALTH DIRECTORS**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) is opposed to House Bill 5457 as drafted. This bill will mandate a local health director of a local health district to serve in a full-time capacity and prohibit such director to engage in private practice. The bill also revises the duties of the Commissioner of Public Health to require that he provide close supervision and oversight to the local health departments.

DPH supports section 1 of this proposal, but suggests that the language be modified to enhance clarity. Health districts consist of two or more towns, which require the district director of health to coordinate and work with multiple town officials and public health partners. The Department suggests replacing the proposed, "shall not engage in private practice" with the clear statement "shall not be otherwise employed."

The Department is opposed to the language in section 2 of this bill. Requiring the commissioner of public health to "provide close supervision and oversight to the local health departments" would have a significant fiscal impact on the Department. There are 73 local health departments and districts in Connecticut. The DPH Office of Local Health Administration, which administers per capita grants and coordinates with local health agencies to fulfill essential public health responsibilities statewide, currently has two (2) professional and one clerical staff.

Further, the proposed language is broad and ambiguous. Local health department/district employees are not State of Connecticut employees. This proposed revision imposes supervisory responsibility on DPH without including a corresponding supervisory authority or enforcement mechanism. Close supervision of local health departments/districts and their staff would most appropriately come from their employing municipality or Board of Health. The Department could not accomplish this within existing resources. In order for the Department to closely supervise the local health departments, an additional 12 staff would be needed, consisting of five (5) epidemiologists, five (5) environmental sanitarians, one (1) attorney and one (1) administrative support staff. As Governor Malloy stated in his 2016 State of the State Address,

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we must reset our expectations of what we can afford in light of the new economic reality facing Connecticut. Because an unbudgeted fiscal impact would result from the new responsibilities imposed on the Department regarding oversight of local health departments, the Department cannot support the proposed language in subsection 2 of this bill.

Thank you for considering the Department's views on this bill.