



QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSIONER NOMINEE

By: Nicole Dube, Principal Analyst

COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC HEALTH (CGS §§ [19A-1A](#), [-1D](#), AND [-2A](#))

The commissioner is responsible for the department's overall operation and administration. To this end, he or she must use the most efficient and practical means to prevent and suppress disease; contract for facilities, services, and programs to implement the department's purposes; secure, compile, and disseminate data on prevention and control of epidemics; annually issue a list of reportable diseases, emergency illnesses and health conditions, and reportable laboratory findings; inspect health care institutions; and oversee local health directors.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the mission of DPH. As commissioner, how do you ensure that the department meets its mission?
2. If asked to prioritize those public health issues most important to you, what would they be?
3. Do you believe that the department has the adequate resources, in terms of both personnel and budget, to meet its statutory obligations?
4. Are you anticipating any restructuring of the department in the near future that will affect its duties, responsibilities, and priorities?
5. The department's scope of practice review process has now been in place for five years. Can you describe the process and how it has worked for the department and health professions? Do you feel the process is effective as currently structured? Do you recommend any changes? (Under a process established in 2011, review committees created by DPH evaluate requests by health care professions seeking to change or establish a scope of practice; the review committees provide findings to the Public Health Committee.)



6. [PA 15-146](#) required the department to recently submit a report to the Public Health Committee on the state's certificate of need (CON) requirements for health care facilities that included recommendations to create an expedited approval process for certain matters currently requiring approval. Can you please comment on these recommendations?
7. Like many other states, Connecticut is facing an increase in the number of emergency room visits and drug overdose deaths involving opioid analgesics. In recent years, the legislature addressed prescription drug abuse in a number of ways, including imposing additional continuing medical education requirements on physicians, increasing access to opioid antagonists, and creating a state prescription drug monitoring program. How does DPH work with the Department of Consumer Protection to regulate health care professions and facilities to ensure controlled substances are not prescribed or dispensed inappropriately or indiscriminately? Do you think the state's oversight is sufficient?
8. Increasing access to primary care providers was one of the stated rationales for 2014 legislation allowing independent practice by advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) with certain experience. What percentage of the state's APRNs practice independently? Has this resulted in any improvements in primary care access? What else can the state do to ensure an adequate supply of primary care providers?
9. Connecticut's local public health system is decentralized and a local health department falls under the jurisdiction of its respective municipality or district. Historically, media reports have raised concerns about disparities in services among departments and districts and, in certain situations, misuse of state resources. Can you describe the department's regulatory role? Do you think the state's oversight is adequate?
10. [PA 15-146](#) made several changes affecting the oversight of health care consolidations and hospital sales. Among other things, it requires DPH's Office of Health Care Access to (1) hire a post-transfer compliance reporter for three years after certain hospital ownership transfers are completed and (2) conduct a cost and market impact review for certain hospital ownership transfers that considers factors related to the transacting parties' business and relative market positions. Can you comment on these legislative changes? Do you have any additional recommendations to improve the state's oversight of these transactions?

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