

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5150

AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING REVISIONS TO THE GENERAL STATUTES CONCERNING MUNICIPAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES AND

**Title:** DISTRICT DEPARTMENTS OF HEALTH.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2018

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/5/2018

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill expands the qualifications necessary to be a municipal or district health director. It requires that nominees hold (1) an allopathic or osteopathic medical degree; (2) a graduate degree in nursing or be certified as a nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist or nurse anesthetist; or (3) a graduate public health degree from an accredited higher education institution. The legislation also requires the commissioner of DPH to approve the appointment of full-time municipal health directors as well as acting district health directors. The legislation removes the term limits for both municipal health directors and district health directors. The bill also authorizes a health district to join an existing health district.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Raul Pino, Commissioner, The Department of Public Health:** The Department supports the legislation because it broadens the qualifications for municipal health directors and district health directors to expand the pool of potential applicants. Also, in requiring approval by the Commissioner for appointment to such positions, it makes the approval process consistent for both district directors of health and local directors of health. Removing the term limit requirements currently in place, the bill will give municipalities more control over their employees. The bill also strengthens the law regarding withdrawal from a health district.

The Department respectfully requests the following substitute language be included in Section 1, to modify CGS Sec. 19a-200:

(b) On and after July 1, 1988, each district health department shall provide for the services of a sanitarian [certified] licensed under chapter 395 to work under the direction of the district director of health. Where practical, the district director of health may act as the sanitarian.

(c ) As used in this chapter, “authorized agent” means a sanitarian [certified] licensed under chapter 395 and any individual certified for a specific program of environmental health by the Commissioner of Public Health in accordance with the [Public Health Code} general statutes and regulations of Connecticut state agencies.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

None submitted.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Judith Sartucci, MSN, RH, Central Connecticut Health District:** As a representative of a health district, she opposes the changes in qualifications proposed in this bill. A graduate degree in public health has been recognized for decades as providing applicants with the skills and training necessary for any district director of health or municipal health director. By expanding the scope of applicants to include those primarily trained in clinical care, the bill does not provide for the other skills and knowledge critical to these positions such as leadership and administration, community assessment and planning, epidemiology and environmental health. The scope of responsibility in the area of directors of health districts requires very specific training.

**Byron Kennedy, MD, PhD, MPH, President, Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH):** Any changes to the qualifications for applicants to these positions must ensure that these other degrees and advanced training curricula clearly provide the necessary skills, training and understanding needed to work in a population based health setting. CADH supports HB 5150 with modifications.

CADH believes it is reasonable to include in a pool of applicants any individual who has a Doctorate degree in Medicine and Osteopathy as long as he or she has at least three years of documented volunteer and/or work experience with a population based health discipline and has received additional training in infectious disease, injury care, community health and preventative medicine. A master’s degree in Public Health (MPH) is the recognized academic degree for practice in public health departments. There should be an expectation that those filling these leadership roles have the same skills and understanding of public health as is provided in MPH advanced degree. CADH opposes inclusion of other health professionals to lead a public health department or district until additional research is conducted to determine if other degrees and advance training curricula provide the necessary educational background to serve in a population based health setting.

**Reported by: Kathleen A. Panazza**

**Date: 3/28/2018**