February 25, 2019

Testimony on Governor’s Bill # 7193:

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PUBLIC HEALTH.**

To: Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee

The Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) is opposed to any proposed reduction to funding levels for local and public health in Connecticut.

CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of the Directors for Connecticut’s local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical overseers for the delivery of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut. CT GS 19a-207a describes in detail what these essential services are and the responsibilities local health departments have in meeting the public health needs of residents of the State of Connecticut. A non-inclusive list of such activities typically includes:

- Tracking reportable and chronic diseases with follow-ups as needed
- Flu prevention programs
- Blood pressure screening at clinics and health fairs
- Asthma and indoor air quality complaint investigations,
- Restaurant and food service facility permitting, inspections and complaint investigations
- Cosmetology salon permitting, inspections and complaint investigations
- Public pool permitting, inspections and complaint investigations
- Septic system permitting, inspections and complaint investigations
- Private well water drilling permits, water quality reviews and complaint investigations
- School and day care inspections and complaint investigations
- Beach water quality monitoring
- Housing code violation investigations
- Elevated childhood blood lead level investigations
- Public health emergency preparedness planning
- Providing public information on ticks and Lyme Disease, mosquito disease prevention programs.
- Submitting specimens to the lab for rabies testing and following up with residents on test results
- Provision of information on radon, mold, carbon monoxide and other indoor air quality contaminants.
- Drug abuse awareness campaigns
- Maintaining timely social media public information press releases
- Working with many local agencies also involved in health and social service programs
- Enforcement and correction of public health code violations

Over the past 10 years, State funding contributions to local health departments has steady declined. In fact, since 2009, there has been NO funding provided to any jurisdiction with a population less than 50,000. This has occurred while new legislation continues to be adopted which increases the responsibilities of local health departments. This session has already seen proposals to lower the acceptable blood lead levels and adopt the International Property Maintenance Code, both of which
represent *major* additional responsibilities for local health. Meanwhile, other popular and essential bills such as those involving marijuana, vaping, smoking, plastic straw & bag bans, etc. are likely to have an enforcement component directed to LHDs.

Meanwhile, the Governor’s proposed bill provides the mechanism for yet another reduction in funding for local health in Connecticut at a time when such emerging deadly diseases as Ebola are ever present. Again, we would like to reiterate that local health officials do the actual work at the community level on an everyday basis, as well as in times of emergencies. Continued funding cuts will render local health departments, the essential component for maintaining high standards of public health, ineffective.

- **Sec. 2. Section 19a-202 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2019):**

- **(b) The amount of payments made by the state to municipal health departments under subsection (a) of this section shall be reduced proportionately in the event that the total amount of such payments and the payments made under subsection (a) of section 19a-245, as amended by this act, in a fiscal year exceeds the amount appropriated for purposes of said subsections with respect to such fiscal year.**

The United Health Foundation has evaluated all 50 states and has determined that Connecticut residents are the third wealthiest in the country. This is a direct result of the preventative work being done by LHDs in combination with the excellent health care system in CT. This extraordinary level of health, one of the many attributes that makes Connecticut a desirable location to live and work will likely be sustained if cuts to local health departments continue.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.