February 28, 2019

Testimony on Governor’s Bill # 7193:
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PUBLIC HEALTH.

Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Appropriations Committee, West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony on Governor Lamont’s recommended budget for the Department of Public Health for the Fiscal Year 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021 Biennium.

The West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District (WHBHD) opposes the Budget Recommendations to amend language to permit the reduction in payments in the event a determination is made during a fiscal year and the WHBHD opposes the 20% reduction in SFY 2020 funding in State reimbursement to local health districts. Such fiscal year reductions in payment and proposed SFY 2020 fiscal year reduction creates uncertainty and a negative impact to the regionalization public health services across Connecticut.

The West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District is located at 580 Cottage Grove Road, Suite 100 in Bloomfield, Connecticut. The WHBHD formed in June of 1995 through the consolidation of the full time municipal health departments of West Hartford and Bloomfield following consideration by the elected Town Councils of each town in the spring of 1995. The WHBHD is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of eight members. The size of the Board is in established Connecticut General Statute, which provides the local elected municipal body to appoint one board member per ten thousand residents up to a maximum of five appointed members. Presently the Board has five members from West Hartford and three members from Bloomfield. The Board adheres to the established Connecticut State Statutes and the By-Laws of the District.

The WHBHD jurisdiction provides public health services to a 2017 estimated population of 84,539 residents covering a combined area of 48.6 square miles. The WHBHD provides public health promotion, prevention and protection services in the Towns of West Hartford and Bloomfield from our central office located in Suite 100 at 580 Cottage Grove Road in Bloomfield, Connecticut. The WHBHD is recognized by the State of Connecticut as a separate municipal governmental entity. In Connecticut Health Districts must comply with all relevant Connecticut General Statutes relating to the operation of a district department of public health. The annual fiscal calendar for the WHBHD is July 1st to June 30th of each year. The District is required to annually perform a financial review and submit the findings to the State of Connecticut.

The Connecticut General Statute requires the Board of Health Districts to estimate the amount of money required to pay the costs and expenses of the district during the ensuing fiscal year, provided, if any municipality within the district has a fiscal year which begins on July first, such

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estimate shall be made by April thirtieth of each year. The policy language amendment in Bill # 7193 states: The amount of payments made by the state to health districts 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-202, as amended by this act, in a fiscal year exceeds the amount appropriated for purposes of said subsections with respect to such fiscal year. This does not provide the fiduciary security and risks the credibility for to the WHBHD Board to provide information in the conduct of public hearing requirement and to present an accurate estimate to the member municipalities to be made by April 13th of each fiscal year.

The WHBHD opposes this amended language for the uncertainty this policy creates is the sustainable fund to public health programs from fiscal year to fiscal year with negative impact to sound budget preparation, presentation at public hearing and impact on municipalities served by WHBHD.

The WHBHD is funded through a variety of sources of revenue. One source is grant funding primarily from the State of Connecticut. This includes funding from the Connecticut Department of Public Health as a per capita based grant, Preventive Health Block Grant Funds and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Grant Funds. The proposed Governor’s Budget indicates the WHBHD can expect a 20.0% reduction in the Per Capita Funding for 2018-2019. WHBHD receives fees for direct services such as subsurface sewage system inspection, food establishment inspections, salon inspections, pool inspection and vaccinations and immunizations. Finally, the District’s contribution per capita rate of $10.94 is an increase in the rate of $0.54 for member Towns. The Governor’s proposed budget indicates a per capita reimbursement rate to local health district for FY 2020 of $1.48 for a decrease of 20% or $0.37 per resident. In the current WHBHD FY 2019 year revenue proportions by sources shows: 1. West Hartford – 44%; 2. Fees for Services – 22%; 3. Bloomfield – 14%; 4. State of Connecticut (all sources) – 14%; 5. Fund Balance Reserves – 6%. A reduction of 20% more in SFY State Funding increase the burden on the Town and Fee revenues. Past reduction is State of Connecticut revenue for all source has exhausted the WHBHD Fund Balance Reserves as a fiscal revenue option.

The WHBHD is opposed to this reduction and to the insufficient fiscal support provided across the local health districts and local health department that strive each day 24 hour and 7 days a week to prevent, promote and protect the public health well-being in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

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