



**Improving the Health
of Pennsylvanians**

February 20, 2020

Allegheny County
Allegheny County
Health Department

Chairman Stanley Saylor
House Appropriations Committee
245 Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202094
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Chairman Matt Bradford
House Appropriations Committee
512E Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202070
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Allentown
Allentown Health Bureau

Re: Local Health Department Funding

Bethlehem
Bethlehem Health Bureau

Dear Chairman Saylor and Chairman Bradford,

Bucks County
Bucks County
Health Department

The Pennsylvania Health Policy Coalition was established to represent the unified interests of the Commonwealth's local health departments. We write to request a substantial increase in Act 12 and Act 315 funding for local health departments.

Chester County
Chester County
Health Department

Pennsylvania's local health departments (LHDs) face unique challenges addressing public health in our communities. Pennsylvania's Local Health Administration Law, Act 315 of 1951, was enacted to improve local health administration throughout the commonwealth by authorizing the creation, establishment and administration of local departments of health in all counties. Our local health departments were established to improve our community's public health via the provision of direct health services, health education and community health leadership and control.

Erie County
Erie County
Department of Health

Montgomery County
Montgomery County
Office of Public Health

Philadelphia
Philadelphia Department
of Public Health

Under Act 315, local health departments may receive state funding of up to 50 percent of total expenditures, but no more than \$6 for every person within each jurisdiction. Act 12, a 1976 amendment to Act 315, authorized the commonwealth to pay local health departments an additional annual grant of up to \$1.50 per resident for environmental health services. This funding, administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Health, can account for more than a quarter of a local health department's budget. Today, **Pennsylvania's ten local health departments are responsible for the health of 41 percent of the State's population.** Yet while LHD's consistently face shrinking budgets and expanding health service needs, Act 12 and 315 funding, adjusted for inflation, **has decreased by 40 percent over the last decade.**

Wilkes-Barre
Wilkes-Barre City
Health Department

York
York City Bureau of Health

pahealthpolicy.org

The massive drop in public health funding has forced local health departments to reprioritize resources and strategies. This funding is becoming increasingly vital as we experience new emerging health threats including the opioid crisis; infectious disease epidemics due to mumps, measles, tuberculosis, hepatitis, Coronavirus; public health emergency preparedness; rising levels of obesity and reductions in primary care for our most vulnerable citizens. State funding for public health must be increased to meet the current needs and challenges faced by local health departments.

LHDs ensure effective standards and consistency in overseeing public health



matters, enhanced coordination between local governments, school districts, hospitals, and other nonprofit public health private agencies and public health priorities that are focused on the specific needs of their surrounding community. Increasing funding for Act 315 to \$35,647,000 and Act 12 to \$9,656,00 would at least bring funding back to their 2010 levels.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to working closely with you to ensure that Pennsylvania's local health departments have the resources necessary to improve the health of Pennsylvanians. If you have questions, please contact Justin Harlem at justin.harlem@phila.gov.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Ron Sugar in black ink.

Ron Sugar
Interim Director
Allegheny County
Health Department

Handwritten signature of Vicki Kistler in black ink.

Vicki Kistler, MEd
Director of Health
Allentown
Health Bureau

Handwritten signature of Kristen Wenrich in black ink.

Kristen Wenrich, MPH, CPH
Health Director
Bethlehem
Health Bureau

Handwritten signature of David Damsker in black ink.

David Damsker, MD, MPH
Health Department Director
Bucks County Health
Department

Handwritten signature of Jeanne Casner in black ink.

Jeanne Casner, MPH, PMP
County Health Director
Chester County
Health Department

Handwritten signature of Melissa Lyon in black ink.

Melissa Lyon, MPH
Health Department Director
Erie County
Department of Health

Handwritten signature of Brenda K. Weis in black ink.

Brenda K. Weis, PhD, MSPH
Health Administrator
Montgomery County
Office of Public Health

Handwritten signature of Sami Jarrah in black ink.

Sami Jarrah, MPH
Chief Operating Officer
Philadelphia Department
of Public Health

Handwritten signature of Henry Radulski in black ink.

Henry Radulski
Director
Wilkes-Barre City Health
Department

Handwritten signature of Barbara Kovacs in black ink.

Barbara Kovacs, MPA
Director of Health
York City Bureau of Health