



Improving the Health
of Pennsylvanians

Allegheny County
Allegheny County
Health Department

Allentown
Allentown Health Bureau

Bethlehem
Bethlehem Health Bureau

Bucks County
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Health Department

Chester County
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Health Department

Erie County
Erie County
Department of Health

Montgomery County
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Health Department

York
York City Bureau of Health

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January 22, 2021

Governor Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary Rachel Levine, M.D.
Department of Health
625 Forster Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Funding for Local Health Departments

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine,

The Pennsylvania Health Policy Coalition represents the state's ten county and municipal health departments. We write to request a substantial increase in Act 12 and Act 315 funding for local health departments.

Pennsylvania's local health departments (LHDs) face unique challenges addressing public health in our communities. While the federal government has disinvested from public health services and our local governments are experiencing dramatic revenue losses, the breadth and complexity of public health work has increased. Today public health departments are expected to respond to the health consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic, climate change, gun violence, health equity, and more.

The Commonwealth's primary strategy for funding LHDs has been through Acts 12 and 315. Those Acts fund public health programs, health services, and administrative and support services. Yet, when adjusted for inflation, **Acts 12 and 315 funding levels have declined by over \$18 million since 2010.**

Under Act 315, LHDs 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 42 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.**

With our local governments experiencing dramatic revenue losses, this massive drop in public health funding has forced LHDs to reprioritize resources and strategies. Local governments simply have far fewer resources and options to generate revenue, particularly for areas of Pennsylvania that face high levels of poverty. Relying on local governments to fund public health is not only impractical, it also ignores the years of investments local governments have borne by backfilling state public health funding cuts.



Acts 12 and 315 funding are crucial to ensuring effective standards and consistency in addressing new emerging threats, overseeing public health matters, enhancing coordination between local governments, school districts, hospitals, and other nonprofit private agencies, and public health priorities that are focused on the specific needs of their surrounding community. State funding for public health must be increased to meet today's needs and challenges. **Increasing funding for Act 315 to \$35,647,000 and Act 12 to \$9,656,00 would restore 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 LHDs have the resources necessary to improve the health of Pennsylvanians. If you have questions, please contact Justin Harlem at justin.harlem@phila.gov.

Sincerely,

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