

February 20, 2020

Testimony regarding the Governor's Proposed Budget

To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Coronavirus, vaccine preventable disease outbreaks, Eastern equine encephalitis, unprecedented influenza season, opioid crisis, PFAS contamination---these are just a few of the recent emerging public health threats that local health departments have been dealing with as they work every day to protect the health of Connecticut residents. These are in addition to the everyday work that keeps our communities healthy including restaurant, daycare, salon and pool inspections, follow up of infectious diseases, and chronic disease prevention, to name a few.

We CANNOT continue to protect the health of the communities you represent if you DO NOT invest in our public health infrastructure!

The State investment in local governmental public health is abysmal. The statutory annual rate of \$1.85 per person for the departments that receive funding, is less than the cost of a cup of coffee. To make matters worse, local health departments *have not received* the \$1.85 in several years as the line item has been underfunded. In addition, local health departments serving a population of less than 50,000 and districts with fewer than two towns receive NO funding at all, yet are statutorily obligated to provide the same public health protections and address the challenges of emerging public health threats. While the challenges and cost of protecting the public's health have risen over the years, there have not been any increases, even for inflation in the per capita rate—only reductions.

We appreciate and understand the fiscal challenges the State faces. However, we urge you to consider the value of the work that local health departments are doing every day and the consequences the State faces if our capacity to address these emerging threats continues to diminish. Please ensure that health departments are fully funded so we can adequately serve the people you represent.

The Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) is a nonprofit organization comprised of the Directors of Connecticut's local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical providers of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut.

Respectfully Submitted by the CADH Board of Directors