



STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

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January 25, 2024

The Honorable J. B. Pritzker  
Governor of Illinois  
207 Statehouse  
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker,

State statute (20 ILCS 5/6.06) requires that the State Board of Health (SBOH) submit an annual report to you about our activities and the status of public health policy in the State of Illinois. I am pleased to submit this report on behalf of all the members of the State Board of Health, as of this date.

Although the morbidity and mortality measures associated with the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic have seemingly diminished over the past year, new (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) and old (seasonal influenza) challenges brought the calendar year to a close. Additionally, the routine obstacles to safeguarding the health of the public, eliminating health disparities, and creating social and physical environments in which all citizens of Illinois can lead healthy and productive lives persist. In this report, we will touch on some of the highlights of the past year.

**Oversight of Rules to Enact Legislation and the IDPH legislative priorities**

As part of our statutory mandate, the SBOH continued to work with IDPH Rules Coordinator, the Legal Department and staff to provide oversight, comments, and suggested revisions to a wide range of legislation that affect public health in Illinois. Our legislative liaison provided quarterly progress updates on the rules that we had previously reviewed. During the past year, the SBOH extensively reviewed the following statutes:

- Home Health, Home Services, and Home Nursing Agency Code
- Community Living Facilities Code

### **Oversight of Rules to Enact Legislation and the IDPH legislative priorities (cont.)**

- Sexual Assault Survivors Emergency Treatment Code
- Student Loan Repayment Program Code
- Sickle Cell Prevention, Care, and Treatment Program (New Part)
- Control of Communicable Diseases Code
- Vision and hearing for preschool children and difficult to test children who cannot be screened with stereoscopic or distance tests
- Loan Repayment for Physicians
- Underserved Health Care Provider Workforce Code
- Control of Tuberculosis Code
- Modular Dwellings and Mobile Structures Code
- Food Code

Additionally, the SBOH received updates on IDPH legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative sessions as well as insights as to what legislators may be proposing that would be under the purview of IDPH.

### **IDPH Leadership**

In September, we welcomed Dr. Janice Phillips as the Assistant Director of the Department. Coming from her prior membership on the SBOH, Dr. Phillips brings a unique perspective on how the Department and the State Board of Health can work together to improve the health of the people of Illinois.

Director Vohra has made it a priority to speak with the full Board at each of our quarterly meetings. Additionally, Director Vohra and Assistant Director Phillips meet with me and Co-Chairman Herrmann before each quarterly meeting. Those informal, collegial meetings are invaluable for the effective collaboration between the Department and the SBOH.

### **Quarterly Reports and Updates**

Throughout the year, we received detailed updates and briefings on current public health issues from IDPH staff and other experts regarding:

- How to improve communication among our constituents as well as improving the image of the Department across the State. The focus was on areas of our State that seem to be prone to mis- and dis-information about health issues.

### **Quarterly Reports and Updates (cont.)**

- An update on COVID during the previous nine months
- An update of the State Health Assessment and the State Health Improvement Plan
- Maternal mortality in Illinois
- The CDC Infrastructure Grant and efforts to attract new employees to the Department as well as to retain those already employed

### **State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) and State Health Assessment (SHA)**

Per its mandate, the State Board of Health, in conjunction with the Illinois Public Health Institute, coordinated and presented the SHA and the SHIP over three days in November in the form of three on-line presentations. Each session lasted three hours with Director Vohra making introductory comments followed by mine (as Chair of the State Board of Health) and other Department staff. Attendance was very good, with over 360 individuals attending, 96 submitting comments, and 30 making oral comments. Public comment was robust, and all comments will be considered by the Department and shared with the State Board of Health.

Since the inception of the SHIP in 2004, members of the SBOH have participated throughout the entire review process. For the current iteration, three SBOH members have been involved in both the SHIP and the SHA.

### **Ad Hoc Task Forces**

In a meeting last Spring, Director Vohra asked the SBOH to advise the Department on three major issues:

- Climate Change (CC) and how the Department can assess its health effects and identify which communities will bear the brunt of those effects; can become a source of current information about CC risks and mitigation strategies; and suggest policy initiatives to further address CC in Illinois
- Health Equity across all communities in Illinois
- Communication of prevention and response strategies of health risks within the State

Page Four

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As a result, three Ad Hoc Communities were formed, with the CC Committee presenting its findings to the Board and formally through a letter to the Director. The other two Committees are currently reviewing relevant subject matter and data on their topics.

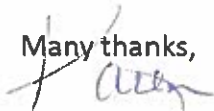
### State Board of Health membership

By statute, the State Board of Health is mandated to comprise 20 members. While we have reached a maximum of 16 members in the past, our current composition stands at 13 dedicated individuals. Allow me to emphasize the profound significance of the expertise encapsulated within our present Board . . . a diverse array of professionals, each bringing a wealth of knowledge and understanding to the table. Among our esteemed members are a Veterinarian, a Physical Therapist, multiple Licensed Physicians representing both medical schools and private practices, a Business Community Representative, an Epidemiologist, a Local Public Health Administrator, an Optometrist, a Health Care Industry Representative, and several distinguished Citizens At Large. Their diverse backgrounds and extensive experience underscore our commitment to ensuring a comprehensive and informed approach to matters of public health. We are privileged to have such a distinguished group steering the course of our health care initiatives, and their collective wisdom resonates profoundly in our decision-making processes.

I will continue to work with Assistant Director Janice Phillips, Governmental Affairs Chief Allison Nickrent and your Office staff to interview and select Board Members committed to sharing their special expertise in service to all Illinoisians.

In conclusion, the State Board of Health commits to supporting the Director, the Assistant Director, IDPH, your Office, and the people of the State of Illinois by fulfilling our statutory advisory mandate designed to improve the health of all people in our great state.

Many thanks,



Karen D. Phelan

Chairman

cc: Deputy Governor Grace Hou  
Senate President Don Harmon  
Speaker of the House Emanuel Chris Welch  
IDPH Director Sameer Vohra  
IDPH Assistant Director Janice Phillips  
State Board of Health Members