



State of Connecticut

SENATE

SENATOR KEVIN D. WITKOS
EIGHTH DISTRICT

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July 2nd, 2020

The Honorable Governor Ned Lamont
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Secretary Melissa McCaw
Office of Policy & Management
450 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH
Acting Commissioner
Department of Public Health
410 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06134

Dear Governor Lamont, Secretary McCaw, and Acting Commissioner Gifford,

I write to you today in response to the concerns shared by my local health departments and municipal officials regarding the 8.5% reduction in local per capita funding for FY 2021. At a time when our local health departments have stepped up to meet the unprecedented demands brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic, this cut in funding is wildly disappointing.

Over the past 5 months we have seen our health departments take on entirely new responsibilities and roles in helping to keep our residents safe and healthy. To now follow through with a budgeted cut in light of recent events is even more frustrating. As it has been reported numerous times, the threat of a second wave either in the fall or at a later date is a serious concern for many. Knowing that our local health departments will inevitably be tasked with additional responsibilities from the state Department of Public Health, I struggle to understand why we are not increasing their funding, rather than decreasing.

While much of the focus during the past several months has rightly been centered on the response to Covid-19, it is also worth noting that health departments have continued to be available for the many other services they provide. Whether inspecting restaurants, testing well water, providing assistance to the municipalities they serve or any other of the wide variety of roles they play, it is time we start to fully invest in their services.

In the Farmington Valley and across the Northwest Corner, the health departments I represent cover 30 towns. This is an impressive demonstration of their ability to provide high quality service on a regional basis. I am very concerned that as these reductions in funding continue, they will no longer be able to provide the service and resources that our residents and businesses expect and deserve.

I of course recognize the fiscal climate our state is in and understand the difficult choices that must be made. Reducing funding to local health districts during a pandemic is simply the wrong approach. As always, I remain willing and ready to help be a part of the solutions to these challenges and welcome an opportunity to work with you all on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Witkos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Witkos" clearly distinguishable.

Kevin Witkos
State Senator, 8th District

Cc. Jennifer Kertanis, MPH, Director of Health, Farmington Valley Health District
Robert Rubbo, MPH, Director of Health, Torrington Area Health District