

PHDoC Position Paper on the Implementation of Senate Bill 08-194

The Public Health Directors of Colorado (PHDoC), representing health departments in both large and small counties across the State of Colorado, have significant concerns in regard to some of the ways Senate Bill 08-194 has been interpreted. Members of PHDoC were integrally involved in the writing, the promotion, and the passage of this legislation, and believe the legislative intent of the bill was to strengthen the public health system in Colorado and bring equity to the provision of essential public health services across the State. We also believe that SB08-194 provides the greatest potential for improvements in the health of the public in Colorado since the Sabin Health Laws were passed in 1947.

The history of public health in the United States is replete with examples of unsuccessful organizational and compositional approaches to local and state public health. The intent of SB08-194 was to preserve the most successful departmental arrangements in the State while leading to the gradual improvement of those with structural or functional weaknesses. It is generally accepted among public health historians, planners and professionals that establishing Boards of Health composed of community members that equitably represent the various governments within a department's jurisdiction, as well as individuals with a broad range of public health and environmental expertise and experience helps to create the foundations of the strongest and most successful public health organizations.

Although SB08-194 grants Boards of County Commissioners a great deal of latitude in the establishment of local public health departments, its intent was to encourage the establishment of broad-based community Boards of Health in most counties while allowing Commissioners in the smallest counties to continue their function as the local Board of Health. It also anticipated the growth of collaboration and coordination of resources between counties to improve efficiencies and expand services. This could be as simple as encouraging memoranda of agreement or contractual arrangements, or as complex as the establishment of district governances. What was not intended was the dissolution of districts or successful cooperative arrangements that were already in place.

We believe that SB08-194 offers the opportunity of building a strong, state-wide system of essential public health services and providing an improved mechanism for the protection of the health of our citizens and our environment. We urge all elected officials and community leaders throughout the State to work with us to meet the intent of this bill and to help establish a foundation of public health that is truly efficient, effective and economical.