

# STATE HEALTH COUNCIL

October 31, 2022

A meeting of the State Health Council (SHC) was called to order by State Health Council Chair, Sherry Adams at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, October 31, 2022 via videoconference with six of the nine council members present.

Members present:

Sherry Adams, Dickinson  
Darrold Bertsch, Beulah  
Mary Gumke, Watford City  
Dr. Carrie Ann Ranum, Hettinger  
Senator Kristin Roers, Fargo  
Dr. Mark Strand, Fargo

Members absent:

Kevin Dauphinais, Fort Totten  
Dr. Daniel Churchill, Bismarck  
Dr. Missy Henke, Bismarck

Staff members present:

Dr. Nizar Wehbi, State Health Officer  
Dirk Wilke, Executive Director, Public Health  
Allyson Hicks, Attorney General's Office, General Counsel  
Kalee Werner, Primary Care Office  
Dr. Christie Massen, Division Director, Laboratory Services  
Dr. Tracy Miller, State Epidemiologist  
Kim Mertz, Director, Healthy & Safe Communities  
Kelly Nagel, Systems and Performance  
Nicole Weigel, Testing and Collection  
Clint Fleckenstein, Emergency Preparedness Multi-Media Specialist  
Miranda Oothoudt, Recording Secretary

## Minutes

Darrold Bertsch moved the approval of the October 6, 2022 minutes as distributed. Second by Senator Kristin Roers and the MOTION CARRIED with no dissention.

### Legislation for Loan Repayment for Public Health

Dr. Mark Strand discussed the challenges of working in public health both in North Dakota and nationally due to debt. He brought forth the idea of incorporating public health employees into the existing student loan repayment program (Century Code 43.12.3) and gave his support of proposing legislation to do so,

provided that the definition of a public health employee be specified. The goal of this would be to attract highly qualified candidates and retain them for the long-haul.

After some discussion about the best way to go about requesting the addition funding, Dr. Strand made a motion to propose legislation to add the public health category into the existing student loan repayment program (CC 43.12.3) and that a request be made for funding for two people in the amount of \$20,000/year/person, which is comparable to that of behavioral health counseling. Dr. Carrie Ann Ranum seconded the motion. By a roll call vote, the MOTION CARRIED with 6 yeas, 0 nays and 3 absent.

### **Legislation for Purpose of Health Council**

With the merger of the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services, the State Health Council no longer has the authority to create administrative rules. This led to discussion about the future role of the Health Council and whether it is still a necessary board if its only purpose is to approve student loan repayments. General Counsel, Allyson Hicks, clarified that any changes made to the duties of the State Health Council have to be made through legislative change.

Senator Kristin Roers made a motion to propose legislation to remove all reference of the State Health Council and disband the council. The motion died due to a lack of a second.

### **SHC meeting frequency**

Chairwoman Adams proposed a meeting schedule of quarterly with the idea that if this proposed schedule is not often enough to accomplish all business, then additional meetings can be added. No one disagreed with the idea of meeting again in three months. She then tasked the Council to come up with ideas for the next meeting as what each thinks the Century Code wording defining the future role of the State Health Council looks like.

### **State Health Officer Update**

Dr. Wehbi reported that work with COVID continues to wrap up as we move to an endemic state. Work with RSV, influenza, colds, TB, etc. continues to keep the Public Health team busy. Budgeting and the upcoming legislative session have also been at the forefront of work being done by the Department. He also expressed his gratitude to the team for all the work they've been doing, especially with the demand over the past three years due to the pandemic.

Darrold Bertsch made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Dr. Carrie Ann Ranum. A voice vote was taken and there was no opposition.

The meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Submitted,

Dr. Mark Strand, Secretary

A recording of the meeting can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czlw4NpXde8>