

**Virginia Department of Health  
Workgroup on Local Health Department (LHD) Structure and Financing  
October 10, 2023 – 1:00 p.m.**

**Members Present:** Ben Barber, President-Elect, Virginia Public Health Association; Robert W. Hicks, Deputy Commissioner of Population Health and Preparedness, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Community Health Services, Virginia Department of Health; Joe Hilbert, Deputy Commissioner for Governmental & Regulatory Affairs, Virginia Department of Health; Michael Jackson, CFO and Director of Government & Legislative Affairs, Virginia Community Healthcare Association; Karen Legato, Health Brigade (on behalf of Rufus Phillips, CEO, Virginia Association of Free and Charitable Clinics); Leah Mills, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources; Dr. Elaine Perry, Director, Richmond and Henrico Health Districts; Reisa Sloce, Director, Lenowisco and Cumberland Plateau Health Districts, Virginia Department of Health; and Jim Taylor, Virginia Association of Counties.

**Note:** Karen Legato participated virtually from her home in Richmond City due to a temporary physical illness. Resia Sloce participated virtually due to distance.

**Members Absent:** Joe Flores, Director of Fiscal Policy, Virginia Municipal League.

**Others in Attendance:** Katie Boyle, Director of Government Affairs, Virginia Association of Counties; Michael Capps, Senior Policy Analyst, Virginia Department of Health; Breanne Forbes-Hubbard, Center for Community Health Improvement, Virginia Department of Health (virtual); Jaqueline Hale, UniteUS; Alexandra Jansson, Senior Policy Analyst, Virginia Department of Health; Kyu Kang, Policy Analyst, Joint Commission on Health Care; Jeff Lake, Senior Advisor to the Deputy for Community Health Services, Virginia Department of Health (virtual attendance); John Ringer, Director of Public Health Planning and Evaluation, Virginia Department of Health

**Welcome and Introductions**

Dr. Perry convened the meeting at 1:00 pm. The group introduced themselves.

**Approval of August 7 Minutes**

Motion from Ben Barber. Michael Jackson seconded. The minutes approved by unanimous voice vote.

**Public Comment Period**

There were no persons signed up for public comment.

**Presentation to Workgroup**

Mr. Hilbert provided a presentation to the workgroup, highlighting work related to:

- Update on report to the Joint Commission on Health Care
- Summary of August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting key topics
- Budget processes: Total cooperative budget has increased each year since FY19, annual amount of earned revenue has varied.

- Community Health Improvement Plans and Community Health Assessments – current draft standards under review
- Staffing needs in Local Health Departments and efforts for recruitment and retention
- Community Health Workers – exploring options for additional funding sources
- UniteUs e-referral platform

There was discussion around the revenue declining during the pandemic, but currently recovering. There was discussion around hospitals completing a CHA that does not complement/match the LHD/locality level. There was discussion around why not-for-profit hospitals are called out, but that this does not preclude partnering with for-profit hospitals.

There was further discussion around turnaround time for waiting for approvals to hire; allocation of positions vs. governance of multi-districts (e.g., Richmond/Henrico; Hampton/Peninsula); and ability to learn from localities with low vacancy rates;

Another topic of discussion centered on asset mapping and where that fits into the community health assessments and UniteUs.

### **Discussion**

Regarding additional strategies to align staffing levels to public health need and the available workforce, there was discussion around if there was an existing or if it would be beneficial to develop a formula to help allocate positions, such as with the Department of Social Services where if there are  $x$  number of cases, there will be  $y$  number of staff to meet that need. There was also discussion concerning the need from localities for quicker budget execution by VDH.

There was discussion about the concept of zero-based budgeting at the local health district level and what advantages and disadvantages there may be to doing so. Jeff Lake shared some history concerning budget practices for local health districts.

The workgroup also discussed how the role and priorities of local health departments should evolve over the next five years. Ms. Sloce shared that from her team, the perspective is that local health districts need to be more diverse in how they serve the community, almost like social workers. The intersection of multiple different community needs (e.g., mental health concerns, homelessness, hunger, clothing insecurity) in addition to other health concerns has become a great focus throughout the pandemic. There was also talk about how asset mapping needs to happen earlier in the process to ensure that health districts can make connections and see where needs really are to focus efforts. As an example, a potential model from Ohio was discussed.

Another topic of discussion included what resources might be provided with the draft Community Health Assessment standards. Ben Barber also shared that he was deeply concerned about what was to come regarding Community Health Workers (CHWs) with certification timelines and what the impact for reimbursement and funding would be with ARPA funding ending on June 30, 2024.

### **Next Steps**

Mr. Hilbert shared the next steps:

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- Receive and incorporate feedback from workgroup members. It was noted that VACO had sent out a survey to members, and they will share what responses they have received.
- VDH will begin work on draft report to General Assembly and schedule the next workgroup meeting to review the draft.
- Preparing for a November briefing to the Joint Commission on Health Care. Ms. Mills suggested a PowerPoint presentation for that and then a full report a later time.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.