



## STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

**Karen Phelan, *Chairman***

Damon Arnold • Rashmi Chugh • Pilar Guerraro • John Herrmann • Nathan Hoffman • Angela Oberreiter  
Joseph O'Connor • Janice Phillips • Julie Pryde • Esther Sciammarella • Susan Swider • Sameer Vohra • Chris Woodrow

March 17, 2022

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.

The recent work of the State Board of Health has been rigorous as we are engaged in 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. In this report, we will touch on some of the highlights of the past few years.

### **Oversight of Rules to Enact Legislation**

The SBOH has continued to work with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) rules coordinators and the legal department to provide oversight, comments, and suggested revisions to a wide range of legislation that affect public health in Illinois. A sample of some of the rules that the SBOH has reviewed over the past few years are:

Home Health, Home Services, and Home Nursing Agency code  
Children's Community-Based Health Care Center code  
Authorized Electronic Monitoring in Long-Term Care Facilities code  
Sexual Assault Survivors Emergency Treatment code  
Head and Spinal Cord Injury code  
Violent Injury Reporting code  
Nursing Education Scholarships Program code  
Immunization Registry code  
Control of Communicable Diseases code  
African-American HIV/AIDS Response code  
AIDS Drug Assistance Program code  
Control of Sexually Transmissible Infections code  
Health Care Worker Background Check code  
Health Care Employee Vaccination code

March 17, 2022  
The Honorable J. B. Pritzker  
Governor of Illinois  
Page Two

### **SARS-Cov-2 Pandemic**

In June 2021, we submitted to you a letter of support for the evidence-based public health policies that responded to and mitigated the devastating effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The SBOH fully supported Executive branch actions to curb the spread of SARS-CoV-2, most notably closures of many public places early in the pandemic, mask wearing, social distancing, and the promotion and distribution of coronavirus vaccines, which prevented many infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. Additionally, these standard public health policies resulted in the historically low seasonal influenza case counts over the past two years.

- Early in the pandemic, the SBOH developed a white paper on the risks associated with interscholastic youth sports. This analysis was used to support discussions between IDPH, the Illinois High School Association, and other stakeholders and led to evidence-based recommendations as to how these very important youth sports could be conducted safely.
- IDPH created a COVID-19 Ambassador Program to distribute factual information, and Board members shared those vital documents throughout their specific geographic and community areas. Board members also assisted IDPH with the creation of SIREN guidance documents for upcoming events and holidays.
- SBOH members from local health departments across the state joined the Governor and the Director during press conferences to confirm support and unity of messaging on pandemic response.
- Members also consulted with the Medical Director to develop a protocol on the utilization of monoclonal antibody and antiviral therapies for acute SARS-CoV-2 infections.
- Throughout the pandemic, the SBOH fulfilled its statutory responsibilities by meeting remotely, engaging all members, and utilizing their individual specific expertise to address policy and rules changes.

March 17, 2022  
The Honorable J. B. Pritzker  
Governor of Illinois  
Page Three

### **State Board of Health Bylaws**

In 2021, the SBOH updated our Bylaws to make them more consistent with the authorizing legislation (20 ILCS 5/5-565) that delineates the roles and activities of the SBOH. This is the first time that the SBOH Bylaws have been updated since 2013.

### **Medical Cannabis**

In August 2013, Illinois became the 20th state to authorize a program for the cultivation and dispensing of cannabis for medical purposes. The SBOH played a significant role in reviewing and modifying the rules for the implementation of the 2013 Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Act, as well as the Alternative to Opioids Act of 2018.

### **Raw Milk**

After two years of debate, and over two gubernatorial administrations, raw milk was made legal in Illinois in 2016. The SBOH spent countless hours in many quarterly meetings using epidemiologic and microbiologic evidence, along with input from many local health departments across Illinois, to inform the implementation of the law permitting raw milk sales. Although the SBOH was not in agreement with the final rules as endorsed by the Rauner administration and the previous IDPH Director, we fulfilled our role of providing evidence-based recommendations to protect the public's health.

### **Repeal of Personal Belief Exemptions for Childhood immunizations**

In 2015, the SBOH held regional meetings in support of IDPH policy to remove personal belief exemptions for mandatory childhood immunizations in Illinois. In accordance with the SBOH bylaws, Board members hosted three public meetings at various sites across Illinois to hear from constituents, both pro and con.

### **Safety Net Sub-Committee**

In 2020 and based on the challenges identified in the communities served by safety net hospitals and critical access hospitals, the SBOH's Policy Committee convened an ad hoc Sub-Committee tasked to create a series of recommendations on how public health could help address disparities in these communities. The Sub-Committee's charge was to learn more about the needs of these communities and to suggest strategies that IDPH could employ. Their findings and draft recommendations were compiled in a white paper that was shared with the Department and may serve as a basis for future policy decisions.

March 17, 2022  
The Honorable J. B. Pritzker  
Governor of Illinois  
Page Four

**State Board of Health Insight and Input**

Deputy Directors/designees of IDPH regularly provide updates to the SBOH on the performance of public health programs across the state, including related public health challenges. The thoughtful insight, input, and questions from the SBOH are value-added contributions that assist in informing these programmatic strategies. In turn, the SBOH has also gained significant collective experience and understanding of the breadth of public health activities and programs across the state, which is critical to the SBOH's statutory role in reviewing public health rules.

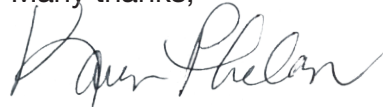
**State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)  
State Health Assessment (SHA)**

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.

Lastly, the SBOH recognizes Dr. Ngozi O. Ezike for her effective and professional leadership during an unprecedented pandemic. She has been a "shining light" in dark times and was an exemplar of clearly communicating policy based on the best evidence to the people of Illinois. We congratulated her on her tenure and wished her the best in all future endeavors. She will be missed.

In conclusion, the State Board of Health will continue to support the Department, your Office, and the people of the State of Illinois by a careful and thoughtful review of public health rules and policies designed to improve the health of all people in our great state.

Many thanks,



**Karen Phelan**  
Chairman  
State Board of Health

cc: Deputy Governor Sol Flores  
Interim IDPH Director Amaal Tokars  
State Board of Health Members