

April 10, 2016

To: House Committee on Human Services
House Committee on Health Care

Re: S. 107 - An act relating to the Agency of Health Care Administration

Dear House Committee Chairs Pugh and Lippert:

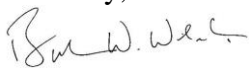
The Vermont Public Health Association (VtPHA) is a member organization that subscribes to the Institute of Medicine's definition of public health which states that "Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy." Consistent with that position VtPHA strongly opposes S107.

As a non-governmental organization that focuses on public health issues within the state of Vermont, VtPHA regularly interacts with many parts of Vermont state government. Although VtPHA has interacted with numerous state agencies, it is fair to say that VtPHA interacts most with the Agency of Human Services (AHS). AHS encompasses all the departments which most people associate with public health. What may be less obvious is that the other "non health" departments within AHS also are engaged in activities which clearly influence the health of Vermonters. Those other areas are what have been referred to as the "social determinants of health". One way in which Vermont has effectively addressed these social determinants of health is through AHS departments such as Children and Families; Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

It is the unanimous position of VtPHA's Board that it is logical, reasonable, efficient and effective to keep these departments within a single agency. To separate them is to ignore the important connections between the health of Vermonters and the social service-oriented departments in AHS.

We feel that to break up AHS would have a detrimental effect on the public health advances which Vermont has made over the years. We thank you for hearing our concern and hope that AHS will be allowed to continue the significant work it does as an integrated agency supporting public health.

Sincerely,



Burton Wilcke

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Board of Directors