

HOUSE BILL 609

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2lr2060
CF SB 548

By: **Delegates Pena–Melnik and Pendergrass**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2022

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Local Health Officers – Removal – Grounds and Process**

3 FOR the purpose of repealing a provision of law providing that a health officer serves at
4 the pleasure of the Secretary of Health and the governing body of the county;
5 establishing the reasons for which a health officer may be removed from office and
6 notice and hearing requirements related to a removal; and generally relating to the
7 removal of health officers.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
9 Article – Health – General
10 Section 3–302
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Health – General**

16 3–302.

17 (a) The health officer for a county shall be nominated by the county and appointed
18 by the Secretary.

19 (b) (1) The governing body of each county shall establish, by ordinance or
20 resolution, the process by which the county nominates an individual for health officer.

21 (2) If a vacancy occurs in the position of health officer for a county, the
22 governing body shall establish a process, in consultation with the Department, for making
23 a recommendation to the Secretary for the appointment of a health officer.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (3) The process established under paragraph (2) of this subsection shall
2 include the requirements for recruiting, interviewing, and recommending applicants for the
3 position of health officer.

4 (c) (1) If the Secretary finds that a nominee meets the qualifications of this
5 section, the Secretary shall appoint the nominee as health officer.

6 (2) If the Secretary finds that the nominee does not meet the qualifications
7 of this section, the Secretary shall reject the nomination, and the county shall provide the
8 Secretary with another nomination.

9 (d) Each health officer:

10 (1) Shall have:

11 (i) A master's degree in public health and at least 2 years' work in
12 the field of public health; or

13 (ii) At least 5 years' work in the field of public health;

14 (2) Shall have any other qualifications and training in the field of public
15 health that the Secretary requires by rule or regulation; and

16 (3) Need not be a physician, if the health officer has a deputy who:

17 (i) Is a physician; and

18 (ii) Meets the qualifications of this subsection.

19 (e) Before taking office, each appointee to the office of health officer shall take the
20 oath required by Article I, § 9 of the Maryland Constitution.

21 [(f) The health officer for a county serves at the pleasure of the governing body of
22 that county and the Secretary.]

23 [(g)] **(F)** (1) The health officer for a county may be removed from office with
24 the concurrence of the governing body of that county and the Secretary **FOR THE**
25 **FOLLOWING REASONS:**

26 **(I) IMMORALITY;**

27 **(II) MISCONDUCT IN OFFICE;**

28 **(III) INSUBORDINATION;**

29 **(IV) INCOMPETENCY; OR**

1 **(V) WILLFUL NEGLECT OF DUTY.**

2 (2) (i) Any information concerning the removal of a health officer from
3 office is confidential in accordance with Title 4 of the General Provisions Article.

4 (ii) Any meeting of the governing body of a county or any meeting
5 that includes the Secretary related to the removal of a health officer from office shall be
6 closed.

7 **(3) (I) IF THE SECRETARY AND THE GOVERNING BODY CONCUR ON
8 THE REMOVAL OF A HEALTH OFFICER, THE SECRETARY SHALL PROVIDE WRITTEN
9 NOTIFICATION TO THE HEALTH OFFICER THAT INCLUDES:**

10 1. THE BASIS FOR THE REMOVAL, SUBJECT TO THE
11 REASONS LISTED IN PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION;

12 2. DOCUMENTATION SUPPORTING THE REMOVAL; AND

13 3. NOTICE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST A
14 HEARING WITH THE SECRETARY WITHIN 10 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF THE WRITTEN
15 NOTIFICATION AND INFORMATION ON HOW TO REQUEST THE HEARING.

16 **(II) IF THE HEALTH OFFICER REQUESTS A HEARING WITH THE
17 SECRETARY:**

18 1. THE SECRETARY PROMPTLY SHALL HOLD A HEARING,
19 PROVIDED THAT THE HEARING MAY NOT BE HELD WITHIN 10 DAYS AFTER THE
20 SECRETARY SENDS THE HEALTH OFFICER A NOTICE OF THE HEARING DATE; AND

21 2. THE HEALTH OFFICER SHALL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY
22 TO BE HEARD PUBLICLY BEFORE THE SECRETARY IN THE HEALTH OFFICER'S
23 DEFENSE, WHETHER IN PERSON OR BY COUNSEL.

24 **(4) A HEALTH OFFICER MAY APPEAL THE DECISION OF THE
25 SECRETARY AT A HEARING REQUESTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (3)(II) OF THIS
26 SUBSECTION TO THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS.**

27 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
28 October 1, 2022.