



January 24, 2023

Testimony before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
HB 214 – Commission on Public Health – Establishment
Favorable

Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Kelly and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

As the Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Maryland, I stand before you to offer expert testimony with a public health perspective related to House Bill 214.

I submit this testimony in my second term as Dean with a rich history of public health knowledge, practice and service. Prior to becoming the Dean in January 2017, I wore the uniform of a Commissioned officer in the United States Public Health Service, from which I retired after 27 years of service. In that time, I was Acting US Surgeon General from July 2013 to December 2014, Deputy Surgeon General from November 2010 to September 2015, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Assistant Commissioner, Director of the Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats, and Medical Officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This proposed legislation presents a timely opportunity to address critical public health needs across our state that will most certainly enhance our public health infrastructure, workforce, services and practices. Relatedly, the 10 Essential Public Health Services (EPHS), recently revised and released in September 2020, should serve as a framework to assist in the creation and execution of this Commission. These 10 EPHS are a result of a collaborative effort by the Public Health National Center for Innovations (PHNCI) and the de Beaumont Foundation and a task force, on which I served, of public health experts, leaders, and practitioners and engaged the public health community in activities to inform the changes. As a member of this task force, I think the updated 10 EPHS are essential to the creation of this Commission and as it convenes, assesses and makes recommendations to inform local, regional, and state-wide changes to public health activities.

The mission of this bill is in direct alignment with the mission of our School—"To promote and protect the health and well-being of the diverse communities throughout Maryland (and in turn the nation and world) through leadership and collaboration." The responsibilities of the Commission match our goals of engaging in education, research, practice and public policy to advance this mission. Ultimately, our shared vision is to positively impact the physical, mental and social health and well-being of all Marylanders at individual, family and community levels.

As Dean of Maryland's only School of Public Health at a public institution of higher education I am pleased to state that this bill will offer a pathway to modernize and strengthen our public health system as a whole. We are looking forward to joining the Commission and lending our leadership

and expertise for the public good. The Commission will offer an opportunity for public health experts to join in concert with individual and community partners to take a deep dive into the public health infrastructure and needs of the state with an interdisciplinary and inclusive approach. It comes at a unique time of a changing public health workforce, new innovations, and the addition of lessons we all have learned and continue to learn from the syndemics of the COVID-19 pandemic, racism, gun violence, political upheaval, and climate change.

As HB 214 moves forward I'd like to make the following recommendations for ways to make the commission even stronger and more effective: 1) changing the composition of the Commission to reflect consumers as well as health officers distinctly representing rural, suburban and urban communities; and, 2) moving up the start time and reporting deadline of the Commission to allow this important work to begin sooner.

As a public health leader and professional, I know that recommendations like the 10 Essential Public Health Services and other best practices for review and recommendations support HB 214's goals of establishing a Commission on Public Health to assess the current and changing landscape of public health and make recommendations to positively and significantly impact the total and well-being of all Marylanders and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. D. Lushniak".

Boris D. Lushniak, MD, MPH, RADM (Ret), USPHS
Dean and Professor

Endnotes

1. 10 Essential Public Health Services at <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html>