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June 7, 1999

Senator Rodney Moen
 State Capitol
 PO Box 7882
 Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Moen:

Attached is testimony to the Senate Committee on Health, Human Services, Aging, Corrections, Veterans and Military Affairs supporting Senate Bill 109 - State Health Officer Credentials. Unfortunately I was not able to actually attend the hearing. Would you please pass the attached along to the members. If you have questions regarding the testimony, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Doug Mormann, Director
 La Crosse Co. Health Department

- cc: Senator Rude
 Representative Meyer
 Representative Huebsch
 Lila Seager, La Crosse County Board of Health President
 Jim Ehram, La Crosse County Board Chairman
 Jerry Seubert, La Crosse County Administrative Coordinator

Attachment

Senator Moen.doc



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**Testimony to Wisconsin Senate Committee on Health, Human Services,
Aging, Corrections, Veterans and Military Affairs**

Date: June 7, 1999

Presented By: Doug Mormann, Director, La Crosse County Health Department

Subject: Support Senate Bill 109--Requirements for State Health Officer

I encourage you to support Senate Bill 109. According to Chapter 250 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, the Department of Health and Family Services has a number of very specific requirements to assure that the public health system in the State is operating efficiently, and does protect the health of the public. Among its responsibilities are to establish statewide health objectives, develop policy and leadership in public health, distribute state and federal public health funds, and take over the delivery of services and enforcement of regulations to protect the health of the public when a local health department fails to perform. These duties require a leader with thorough understanding of the art and science of health. The current Statutes are silent on qualifications of the State Health Officer, either in terms of experience or training.

Chapter 251 of the Wisconsin State Statutes describes the responsibilities of a local health department that are similar in nature to those of the State Department of Health and Family Services, but at the local level. It goes into significant detail describing the training and/or experience that are required of a local health officer.

It seems reasonable to me that the State Health Officer, the official looked to by the Legislature, the Governor, and the people of the State for guidance in protecting the health of the public, be a person that has had training and experience in a health-related field. Applying to the State Health Officer those same standards that currently apply to a health officer at the local level is appropriate.

In earlier discussions of similar legislation, the thought has been put forward that it is not necessary for the State Health Officer to have training and experience in health services because the State Health Officer can draw upon the health expertise and experience of his/her subordinates when establishing public health policy for making recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on important public health programming. I believe having access to talented personnel is not sufficient for the State Health Officer. A similar situation would be if a person needing medical care went to the local medical clinic and talked with the Administrator



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of the clinic about the health problems he or she has. The Administrator then would contact the physicians working in the clinic to determine what specific treatment would need to be provided to the patient. In this case, the patient who we are trying to keep healthy are the people of Wisconsin. The patient needs to hear directly from the health personnel about ways to keep healthy. The misinformation should not be filtered through an Administrator who does not have a good understanding or experience in public health services.

The State of Wisconsin has a wealth of talented individuals with training in a health-related field and experience and interest in helping to protect the health of the public. We, as a State, should take advantage of this resource.

Iowa County Health Department

1205 N. Bequette Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533

Telephone:
608-935-2810

May 26, 1999

Regarding: 1999 Senate Bill 109

I am June Meudt, the Director/Health Officer from Iowa County Health Department. The Health Department is located in Dodgeville, WI.

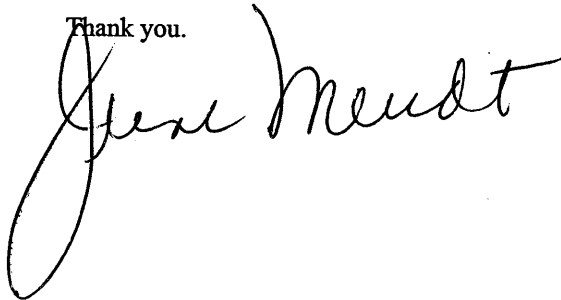
I am here to thank you for introducing this bill. I am definitely in support of having the state health officer have the qualifications of at least a Level I local health officer. I am also on the Board of Directors of WALHDAB, Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards. This board recently voted to support this bill and feel it is a positive step for the infrastructure of Public Health in Wisconsin.

The Public Health statutes were revised in 1993 and that has been greatly appreciated. Included in these statutes is a basic educational requirement that every local health officer must have in order to be appointed for the position. I feel that having a state health officer with at least these qualifications is necessary.

A qualified State Health Officer has more credibility with the public health community. A qualified state health officer will provide for a stronger linkage between the state Department of Health and the Local Health Departments. This will only enhance the state of public health in our state.

Again, I do support this bill.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June Meudt". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name "June Meudt".



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Tommy G. Thompson, Governor
Joe Leean, Secretary

May 26, 1999

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans and Military Affairs

FROM: Joe Leean
Secretary

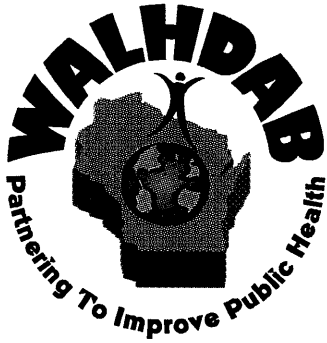
RE: Testimony in Opposition to 1999 Senate Bill 109

1999 Senate Bill 109 limits who the Secretary of Health and Family Services can designate as responsible for the State Health Officer duties and this limitation is based on what kind of degree someone received in college. Under this change to law, there are many people who have dedicated their lives to improving Wisconsin's public health who could not be considered for the job simply because they do not have a specific degree and not because they lack the requisite knowledge or experience.

Traditionally, the Secretary of DHFS designates the Division of Public Health Administrator as being responsible for the duties of the State Health Officer. This designation helps ensure consistent and cohesive direction at the state level for the improvement of Wisconsin's health status and population-based health policy.

The State Health Officer should be the point person for all public health functions in the Department, and must coordinate action between the local, state and federal governments. This coordination requires someone with excellent administrative abilities and dedication to the public's health. The requirement of a nursing degree, while not assuring either of these critical capabilities, would eliminate the possibility of many qualified people from serving the state in this capacity. Wisconsin has had the good fortune to have incredible people serving as the State Health Officer; people recognized and relied on nationally for their abilities. This bill would have prohibited those people from serving the state.

Some may argue that the Secretary should appoint one of the medical officers or public health nurses as the State Health Officer. I do not believe that would be in the best interest of the state. Statutorily, the State Health Officer may appoint such advisory and examining boards as needed to carry out the duties of the office and must appoint state epidemiologists for program areas of acute and communicable diseases, occupational and environmental diseases, maternal and child health, and chronic diseases. For a person other than the Administrator of the Division of Public Health to have the authority to appoint state employees and to convene examining boards and commissions could cause disjuncture in the state's health programs without a clear line of not only authority, but also accountability.



**WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENTS AND BOARDS**

MAY 25 1999

May 24, 1999

Senator Rodney C. Moen
Room 8 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison WI 53707-7882

**Re: Letter of Support
Senate Bill 109**

Dear Senator Moen:

This Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards strongly supports Senate Bill 109 which requires minimum qualifications for the state health officer.

We recognize that currently with no minimum educational requirements for this important post that the Division of Public Health may not be lead by a public health orientated or experienced person who is attuned to our local public health needs.

The passage of this legislation will move Wisconsin in a positive direction that will benefit the current and future health of all of our residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Matteo, Co-President
Kenosha County Health Officer

Pete Salm, Co-President
Calumet County Board of Health



MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 26, 1999

TO: Senator Rodney Moen, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Health Utilities, Veterans and Military Affairs

FROM: Kathy Newman, President

RE: SB 109

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 109. The Wisconsin Public Health Association (WPHA) supports your efforts to establish minimum educational requirements comparable to those of a local health officer.

WPHA is committed to setting and meeting the highest standards in the delivery of public health services. We believe preventive care and public health services, planned and delivered by qualified professionals, are key to making dramatic improvements in the health of the people of Wisconsin.

SB 109 would guarantee the State Health Officer, appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Services, have qualifications that are equal to those required for a local health officer in a Level I health department. WPHA does support the creation of minimum education requirements. We would specifically support SB 109 if the minimum requirements were comparable to those for a health officer of a Level I local health department or either a Level II or III local health department. This change still ensures that only those with educational preparation in the science of public health will hold this position. We view this bill as an important piece of the state's preparation to meet the public health challenges of the future.

WPHA commends Senator Moen for introducing this important legislation, and Committee members for holding a hearing on the bill. Thank you for your consideration.