



Montgomery
County Council

Committee: Directly to Council sitting as Board of Health

Committee Review: N/A

Staff: Linda McMillan, Sr. Legislative Analyst

Purpose: Receive briefing and have discussion – no vote expected

Keywords: Board of Health, Commission on Health

AGENDA ITEM #5(A&B)

October 29, 2019

Discussion

SUBJECT

Semi-Annual Update from Health Officer¹

Annual Update from the Commission on Health²

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Dr. Travis Gayles, County Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services (Department of Health and Human Services)

Desiree de la Torre, Chair, Commission on Health

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- None

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Dr. Gayles will provide the Council, sitting as the Board of Health, with an update on public health issues in the County.

Desiree de la Torre, Chair of the Commission on Health, will inform the Council about the Commission's priority public health areas that are the current focus of the Commission's work: School Health, Vaping & Smoking, and Communicable Diseases.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- None at this session.

This report contains:

Commission on Health Priorities

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¹ State law requires each county board of health to meet in May and October of each year and any other time the board considers necessary (Health General Section 3-302).

² County Code Chapter 24, Section 24 requires the Commission on Health report to and meet with the County Council, sitting as the County Board of Health, at least annually. This has traditionally been scheduled with the October meeting with the Health Officer.



Montgomery County Commission on Health (COH) Fiscal Year 2020 Priorities

The Commission on Health (COH) respectfully submits its Fiscal Year 2020 Priorities. The COH is focused on three key public health priorities: **school health, vaping and smoking, and communicable diseases**. We plan to coordinate and align these efforts with our fellow Boards, Committees, and Commissions that have identified the same or similar priorities. In addition, we plan to align our priorities with Executive Marc Elrich's Transition Report. We recognize an opportunity to partner on the Thriving Youth and Families priority that aims to get "all children off to a good start in life" because it has "innumerable long-term benefits for our community, including a stronger economy, lower poverty, and less crime. Children need healthy, supportive families, great schools, and caring communities." Together, we believe we can address the following public health priorities.

A. School Health

Studies have shown that poor health can put education at risk – kids with poor health tend to have higher absenteeism rates, lower academic concentration, and higher risk of learning disabilities. Conversely, education can create opportunities for better health – adults with a good education tend to have better jobs, access to health care, live in healthier neighborhoods, and live longer lives.

Our initial efforts will focus on the need for additional school nurses in Montgomery County Public Schools. We are significantly concerned with the current level of school health nurse staffing that would ensure the health and safety of students given the high school health nurse to student ratios and increasing complexity of health conditions and regulatory requirements. Our assessment will include outreach to school administrators, parents, students, and government agencies. We will also identify the current barriers and opportunities for additional funding.

B. Vaping and Smoking

According to Dr. Gayles, there have been 15 reported cases of severe respiratory illness related to vaping in Maryland and three MCPS students have been transported from school after collapsing. We look forward to analyzing the impact and engaging with the community on current legislation that both you, Councilmembers Gabe Albornoz and Craig Rice, have developed to prohibit e-cigarette and vape manufactures, like Juul, from distributing their products near schools. In collaboration with the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council, we will identify needs/gaps and other important issues related to vaping and smoking and where we need additional resources for public health planning.

C. Communicable Diseases

Montgomery County has experienced an increase in sexually transmitted infections (e.g. gonorrhea, chlamydia) that mirror state and national trends, and a rise in both active and latent tuberculosis cases. A closer examination of the epidemiological data shows a number of conditions with increasing trends and demonstrated disparities by race/ethnicity, age, sex, and geographic area. We plan to review this data and advise public health planning to better target efforts and resources to meet the evolving needs of a changing population in the County.

We look forward to working with our government leaders, community organizations, and community as we work together to achieve health equity.