

May 28, 2008

Honorable Sonny Perdue
Governor of Georgia
State Capitol
206 Washington Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Perdue:

As chair of the nursing section of the Georgia Public Health Association, I would like to personally thank you on behalf of the 1,564 public health nurses for your record of support for our profession. The enhancement for Public Health nursing salaries along with your effort to increase grant-in-aid to counties reflect your commitment to access to care for those in our communities who depend on provision of our services. Although the grant-in-aid had to later be removed due to budgetary restraints, you laid the ground work for the next session as our economy improves.

We would also like to commend the work done by both Lieutenant Governor Cagle with his initiative in having the Office of Audits review public health's capabilities and that of Speaker Richardson in appointing the House Public Health Study Committee chaired by Representative Donna Sheldon, and the House Health System Study Committee chaired by Representative Ben Harbin. These bodies of work are another positive step that your administration under took to document the serious problems in the State and county public health programs.

As Chairman Ben Harbin stated, "The members of the General Assembly take seriously our charge to ensure that state government is responsive to the needs of Georgians in both a compassionate and cost-effective way." Both he and Senator Butler are to be commended for taking this body of work to the people within communities to listen and learn about their needs and limited resources.

After reviewing these documents, your next step to create a Task Force in response to the concerns of the House Health Study Committee further reflects your commitment to Public Health and the clientele we serve each day. Your understanding of a real need to create a new Department of Public Health that is capable of providing professional services while having adequate resources to meet primary care and other health care needs is outstanding. Your statement that, "We must ensure that we are not just getting the best possible value for our investment in DHR- but that we are also providing the best possible service for the people of Georgia" supports the theory of every Public Health nurse that restructuring DHR to meet the needs of the community is vital at this point in time. As Senator Jack Hill stated, "We know that such changes in the framework of state government are necessary from time to time to keep our agencies as effective as possible. This isn't a change we take lightly and we're committed to doing this the right way with expert input and creative solutions."

We too agree that this is a necessary change and the right time to make the right change. This is the time for Public Health to be given the status of a stand-alone agency to best integrate health delivery and prevention services to the people we serve in Georgia. Our mission is unique and not compatible with other agencies missions. We really do not need to be an appendage to another agency. Therefore; the nursing section of the Georgia Public Health Association stand with you in support of this effort and again thank you for your continued support of all public health nurses and the clientele we represent.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Townley, RN, BSN
Chair – Nursing Section
Georgia Public Health Association

C: Honorable Casey Cagle, Lt. Governor
Senator Jack Hill
Representative Ben Harbin
Representative Mark Butler
Hannah Heck, Director of Policy
Trey Childress, Director, OPB