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September 25, 2023

Lana Salisbury
Chair
Northeast Connecticut District Department of Health
69 South Main Street, Unit 4
Brooklyn, CT 06234

RE: NECCOG Vote of No Confidence

Dear Ms. Salisbury:

The Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) at their September 22, 2023 Regular meeting took a vote of **No Confidence** regarding the Northeast Connecticut District Department of Health (NDDH) as it relates to its executive director, executive director's performance and focus. It is our collective position that significant changes must occur to correct the current state of NDDH to regain the confidence in its operations.

As you are aware, NDDH is a product of the towns of this region coming together in 1973; to form a regional district department of health. Connecticut statute enabled "towns...[to] unite to form district departments of health, which shall be **instrumentalities of their constituent municipalities**" (*Emphasis added*). This is an important fact to remember and one that should not be lost as we move forward with solutions.

Our vote of **No Confidence** stems from the following:

1. An inability (or unwillingness) of the executive management, specifically the Executive Director, to provide effective, competent and compassionate leadership to the District. These problems have had, in our view, a corrosive effect on staff morale and have fostered a climate of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. Efforts to bring these problems to the attention of the NDDH Board through both informal and formal processes have routinely been met with resistance. The most recent elimination of three positions at NDDH is, in our view, a prime example of this deficiency.
2. The clear lack of understanding of the local budget process and the inability to explain or defend a more than 50% increase to the local per capita fee during the most recent fiscal year. It is inexplicable why the Director could not provide a rationale for the increase.
3. The inability to preform required inspections - while charging fees for such inspections. We understand the challenges in hiring staff - however, those challenges and their consequences need to be explained to the member towns.

4. The now apparent lack of a clear understanding as to what the mission/purpose is of the District; its needed structure; board training; staffing - including position descriptions and salary ranges; understanding of FOIA and basic HR principles.

It is our strong recommendation that the District retain a qualified firm in municipal organization to work with the District in terms of its mission, structure, staffing, policies and community relations. This cannot and should not be attempted by the District utilizing an in-house approach. To be successful it requires a set of fresh and knowledgeable eyes.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this matter. This is not a conclusion that any of us wished to arrive at - but circumstances have left us with no alternative. We very much want NDDH to thrive and we are committed to that result. NECCOG is fully prepared to assist the District whatever way needed.

Sincerely,



Maureen Nicholson
Chair, Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

cc: NDDH Board of Directors
NECCOG Board of Directors
Northeastern Connecticut State Legislative Delegation
Commissioner of Public Health
The Honorable Ned Lamont, Governor
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Christopher Murphy, u.S. Senate