



Let Public Health Professionals Do Their Jobs: An Update April 2024

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Last August, the Virginia Public Health Association published an issue brief, "[Let Public Health Professionals Do Their Jobs](#)." This brief celebrated the work Virginia's public health professionals do to keep us safe and healthy. It also highlighted extreme policies some states have adopted that prevent public health professionals from doing their jobs. The brief called on Virginians to reject these policies.

Fortunately, Virginia's General Assembly did just that. Legislators rejected an extreme proposal that would hamper public health professionals from vaccinating communities during an epidemic. Other threats to public health failed to materialize, suggesting that many Virginians and the legislators who represent them increasingly appreciate the importance of public health and public health professionals.

Still, there is much more work to do. Public health is still under threat in many states. A proposal in Iowa would prohibit the Governor from closing a place of worship even in response to a disaster or public health emergency. A proposal in Kansas would prohibit the Secretary of Health and Environment from acting to prevent the introduction and spread of infectious or contagious disease. A proposal in Oklahoma would arbitrarily limit the length of a public health emergency – similar to a bill the Virginia General Assembly approved in 2022.

Supporters of these types of proposals claim that they are advancing individual rights. In truth, these proposals only serve to advance disease and devastation. Public health professionals must be allowed to do their jobs for the same reason first responders must be allowed to do theirs: they keep us safe. Mandatory immunizations and quarantines during a public health emergency must be allowable for the same reason mandatory building and fire codes exist: they keep us alive.

All Virginians deserve to be safe and healthy. Virginia policymakers should continue to reject extreme proposals so public health professionals can do their jobs.