



Michigan Association of Local Environmental Health Administrators MALEHA

Representing Local Environmental Public Health Departments in Michigan

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Annual President's Report
September 17, 2020

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Dear MALEHA members,

It has been a privilege to serve you during the last year. Who knew back in September of 2019, when all looked normal, that life as we knew it would come to an abrupt stop in March. Further, while all of our traditional roles and responsibilities in Environmental Health remained, we were also tasked with playing a key role within our agencies actively engaging in COVID response. Many of us were/are involved in contact tracing, developing and reviewing COVID plans, and the ever changing, and frustrating, landscape of executive order enforcement.

In the past, Presidents would report on what we were able to accomplish as an association at the end of their term. Although out of our control, we were not able to complete many initiatives when COVID became part of our daily operations. I don't want us to forget where we left off as we undoubtedly move beyond this time and are able to refocus to make improvements to the environmental health system in Michigan. Below is list and brief summary of some of these initiatives:

- Marijuana – the Food Committee was working with MDARD on how the Marijuana regulations may impact or conflict with licensed food establishments.
- Statewide Sanitary Code – there were some additional discussions on the joint MALEHA/MALPH committee on next steps toward either being proactive or reactive to any pending legislation. This topic sounds like it's been tabled for now, but may be reintroduced in 2021.
- Accreditation – MALEHA Onsite Committee and EGLE were in the process of working through some potential changes to accreditation standards. I believe there is a great opportunity here for MALEHA and EGLE to work together to make meaningful changes to this program moving forward. There may also be opportunities for MALEHA to work with MALPH as the accreditation board considers changes in future cycles.
- Food Code – the Food Committee worked with MDARD on proposed changes to the Food Code and MALEHA was in support. However, due to COVID there was no further movement at the legislative level to make this law.
- Body Art Rules – MDHHS revised the rules and organized a review process with stakeholders including LHDs. These rules still need some additional review before they are introduced and likely that will be happening sometime next year.
- PFAS – In August new drinking water standards were promulgated that have impacted how we interpret water supply results both from an environmental contamination and a public water supply monitoring perspective. Although the



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more protective standards are a step in the right direction, the local investigation of contamination sites and the enforcement of non-community sampling requirements have added some additional burden on LHDs.

Currently, we are in the midst of the pandemic and continue to be engaged in executive order enforcement. I have been pushing for a more collaborative approach to escalated enforcement with the other state agencies, but to date nothing concrete has been developed. Throughout this process it has felt like we are all fighting our own local battles when better, more organized state support would have been very helpful for all of us. I am hopeful that a better process is being developed, however at this point it may be a little late in the game to have the impact we had wanted.

During this time, when we all seem a bit disconnected from each other, I want to emphasize the need for everyone to stay engaged. We need to do this to keep our association strong. It can be more difficult to communicate during this time, but we need to make the effort so that we continue to have a shared message throughout the state and share our local experiences. That interaction makes us all stronger. This also applies to our relationships with our state partners. Not having the face to face conversations and meetings can have a negative impact on relationships. As an association, we need to continue to make a concerted effort to stay engaged.

Lastly, as I reflect over this last year, I'm not sure what to say. COVID happened. (Insert dumpster fire picture here). I feel like I've done the best I could under these circumstances to keep you informed and stay relevant while we have been working with our various state partners. It has been overwhelming at times, but I appreciate working with all of you and your knowledge and expertise has been invaluable. That being said, I will work closely with Andrew Cox as he assumes the presidency to ensure a seamless transition. I have no doubt he will do a great job to serve you all.

I wish you all the best!

-Matt