



## **GEAUGA PUBLIC HEALTH**

*Promoting and Protecting Community Health*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **GEAUGA PUBLIC HEALTH STAFFING TO BE PROVIDED BY LAKE COUNTY GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT**

Cost-Saving Measure to Impact Employees; Preserves Vital Services for Geauga County Residents

**Chardon, OH, March 15, 2023** – The Geauga Board of Health voted unanimously Wednesday to enter into a cross-jurisdictional agreement with the Lake County General Health District to serve as a staffing agency for Geauga Public Health. The agreement will save Geauga County residents as much as \$600,000 annually in health services costs, while maintaining all the vital services they currently receive at Geauga Public Health (GPH).

“This is not a takeover and it’s not a merger,” said Geauga Public Health Board President Richard Piraino. “Lake County General Health District will serve as a staffing agency for Geauga. Our agreement with Lake is the best way for Geauga to maintain control of the health services we provide our residents while saving those residents significant money every year.”

The agreement takes effect on April 3. Because Lake County General Health District will be providing GPH staffing going forward, 17 GPH employees will be laid off as of March 31. They will be able to apply with Lake County General Health District to supply those staffing services, but no one is guaranteed a position. GPH will provide severance to impacted employees.

“We know this is painful for our Geauga Public Health employees, and we’re truly sorry for that. GPH is facing a budget shortfall of over \$500,000 in 2024, and we had to make a very difficult decision,” Piraino said. “We have worked diligently to find the best solution, and we are entering this agreement to guarantee we can continue providing the people we serve in Geauga County with the services they need and deserve.”

All Geauga Public Health representatives, whether GPH employees or contracted Lake employees, will continue working on behalf of and at the direction of the Geauga Board of Health. The Geauga Board of Health, appointed by elected Geauga officials, will continue to control GPH policies, programs and services. GPH will continue to issue its own permits, maintain its vehicles, office, website and its identity.

“Gauga residents will continue to go to the same places to receive the same services,” Board President Piraino said. “None of that will change.”

Because of the agreement between the health districts, the combined populations of the two counties will open the possibility to apply for larger grants, which are critical for funding health departments, unavailable to Geauga or Lake on its own. And the efficiencies that will be gained offer benefits to the two health departments and residents of both counties. The advantages include:

- Gaining access to additional programs such as outreach services because of increased access to grant funding sources;
- Cutting the cost of public health services to residents by funding some current programs through qualifying grants;
- Sharing specialty staff, such as in the areas of data analysis, accreditation, community needs assessment, emergency preparedness, finance, and grant writing; and
- Increased coordination for emergency response and public health emergencies.

“It is clear,” Piraino said, “that we can be stronger together and more fiscally responsible to Geauga County residents.”