

May 7, 2018

Dr. Rose Marie Martinez, ScD
President
Council on Education for Public Health
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 220
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Martinez:

The Council on Education for Public Health assures quality in public health education and training by providing standards and evaluating schools and programs that seek accreditation. We realize that the recent updates to the CEPH requirements provided schools with greater flexibility; however, as part of the environmental health community, we would like to express our concern about the impact of implementation of the new CEPH requirements on environmental health programs within CEPH accredited Schools of Public Health. Without a mention of environmental health in the foundational competencies for public health degrees, schools and programs are finding it challenging to defend the need for environmental health courses and may no longer teach what is often called the 'Grandfather of Public Health'.

We have already heard of schools dropping their environmental health program or considering eliminating these programs. For example, Loma Linda has already dissolved its environmental health major and done away with its environmental health core course. We have heard similar stories from at least three other schools, including the University of Michigan.

We live in a time of increased understanding and recognition of the impact of environment and health:

- APHA named 2017 the Year of Climate Change and Health
- Air pollution is considered one of the largest burdens on public healthⁱ
- Food-borne illnesses occur with alarming frequency^{ii,iii*}
- Housing quality and lack of housing continue to present communities with increased health challenges, increased health care costs^{iv} and pre-mature deaths^v
- Drinking water systems throughout the United States present increased risk to health^{vi}(e.g., Flint, Michigan)^{vii}
- Lead exposure continues to be cause for concern across the U.S. and impacts our most vulnerable populations, particularly children who experience such health risks as lower IQ, delayed growth and learning difficulties^{viii}
- Zoonotic and vector-borne diseases like Zika virus are recurring in areas where they have been controlled (or are spreading into new areas)^{ix,x,xi}

As representatives of people and organizations that deal with these issues daily, we believe that schools and programs of public health need to be increasing knowledge for all public health graduates around the impact of our environment on our health, not decreasing it. It is vital to train the next generation of public health professionals in a consistent manner that maintains the presence of environmental health education and practical experience that is vital to the protection of public health in this nation and worldwide. Environmental health should be included in the CEPH requirements and, at the least, programs should receive direction and assistance with adjusting to new CEPH requirements in a manner that maintains critical environmental health aspects of their public health

programs.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Surili Patel, MS
Deputy Director, Center for Public Health Policy, American Public Health Association

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Note: Endorsement from individual Environmental Health Coalition members does not necessarily represent endorsement from the Environmental Health Coalition member's home organization. Participation in the Environmental Health Coalition does not imply endorsement of this document.

Cc: Laura Rasar King, MPH, MCHES, Executive Director, lking@ceph.org

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- ⁱⁱ Scallan, E., Hoekstra, R. M., Angulo, F. J., Tauxe, R. V., Widdowson, M.-A., Roy, S. L., ... Griffin, P. M. (2011). "Foodborne Illness Acquired in the United States—Major Pathogens". *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 17(1), 7–15. <http://doi.org/10.3201/eid1701.P11101>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Surveillance for Foodborne Disease Outbreaks — United States, 1998–2008. *MMWR* 2013;62(No. SS-2):[1-34].
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- ^v James Krieger, Donna L. Higgins, "Housing and Health: Time Again for Public Health Action", *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 5 (May 1, 2002): pp. 758-768.
- ^{vi} Environmental Working Group. "State of American Drinking Water: EWG's Tap Water Database." Accessed February 16, 2018. <https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/state-of-american-drinking-water.php#.WodIXbynHcs>.
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- ^{viii} World Health Organization. "Lead poisoning and health." August 2017. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>
- ^{ix} Hennessey M, Fischer M, Staples JE. "Zika Virus Spreads to New Areas — Region of the Americas", May 2015–January 2016. *Am J Transplant* 2016; 16: 1031–1034.
- ^x Schwartz AM, Hinckley AF, Mead PS, Hook SA, Kugeler KJ. Surveillance for Lyme Disease — United States, 2008–2015. *MMWR Surveill Summ* 2017;66(No. SS-22):1–12. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6622a1>
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*The International Federation of Environmental Health has declared Global Food Safety and Sustainability as the theme for the 2018 World Environmental Health Day.