

**BOARD OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes for April 12, 2022**

**Members Present:**

James Curran, M.D., M.P.H., Chair  
Mitch Rodriguez, M.D., Secretary  
Cynthia A. Mercer, M.D.  
Kathryn Cheek, M.D., F.A.A.P.  
Sangmin Ryan Shin, M.D., M.A., F.A.A.O.S.  
Tamica Valliere-White, M.D., F.A.C.S  
Robert Cowles III, M.D., F.A.C.S

**Members Absent:**

John Hauptert, F.A.C.H.E., Vice Chair  
Major General Thomas M. Carden, Jr.

The Board of Public Health held its monthly meeting on April 12, 2022. The meeting was virtual and was led by Chairman James Curran, M.D. An agenda and a list of attendees are attached hereto and made official parts of these minutes.

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call:  
The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Dr. Curran, following a roll call by Dr. Mitch Rodriguez, all members were present except Mr. John Hauptert and Major General Thomas Carden.
- II. Approval/Adoption of Minutes:  
Dr. Rodriguez presented the minutes of the March 8, 2022, board meeting for discussion and approval. There was no discussion. The minutes passed unanimously.
- III. New Business:
  - A. 2022 Legislative Session Update- Megan Andrews, J.D., Office of Government Relations

Megan Andrews, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, gave an overview of the legislative session. During the 2022 Legislative Session, 192 Bills were presented; 89 of these bills are considered direct impact bills.

**AGENCY BILLS:**

Childhood Lead Poisoning- HB1355 *PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- Confirmed lead poisoning from 20 to 3.5 micrograms of lead per deciliter to align with CDC recommendations, also updates the definition of lead hazards to align with EPA regulations. The budget approved is \$1,845,384

Smokefree Air Act & Vaping- HB1348 *-DID NOT PASS- Did not get called up for a vote in the Senate*

EMS Fingerprinting- SB404 *PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- The Georgia Bureau of Investigation would be authorized to retain fingerprints so DPH can participate in a program allowing ongoing review of the EMS personnel individual's criminal history.

Filming in Health Depts- SB539 *-PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- This bill creates an offense for recording patients in county health department facilities without their consent.

#### MOST RELEVANT DIRECT IMPACT BILLS

Mental Health Parity Act- HB1013 *-PASSED- Signed by the Governor*

- Comprehensive mental health reform for Georgia. DPH will assist developing programs to serve disabled infants, children, and youth and participate in the Multi-Agency Treatment for Children (MATCH) team to explore resources and solutions for complex and unmet needs for children in this state.

Raw Milk Sales- HB1175 *PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- Authorizes and regulates the production, handling, transporting, and sale of raw milk and raw milk products for human consumption. Only allows direct-to-consumer sales of this product.

Audiology Screening- HB1186 *- PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- Allows persons who are not licensed audiologists to use otoacoustic emissions or auditory brainstem response technology as part of a screening process for the initial identification of communication disorders in individuals up to age 22.

Food Trucks- HB1443 *PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- Food trucks can operate in other counties opposed to being permitted in every county

HIV Modernization- SB164 *-PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- Modernization of HIV related laws to support current understanding of best public health practices for preventing and treating HIV.

COVID Vaccine Passports- SB345 *- PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- Prohibits state and local governments from mandating vaccine passports for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Maternal Autopsies- SB496 *PASSED- Awaiting Governor's Signature*

- A medical examiner's inquiry must be conducted for a death of a pregnant female or one who was pregnant within 1 year of death. Does not apply to a death that resulted from an incidental or accidental cause.

Unmask Georgia Students- SB514 *-PASSED- Signed by the Governor*

- Provides that no local board of education, school superintendent, school administrator, teacher, or other school personnel may make or enforce a rule requiring students to wear face masks or coverings while on school property unless the rule allows for exemption by parent or guardian.

#### B. Epidemiology Update: COVID-19 - Cherie Drenzek, D.V.M., M.S.

##### Snapshot of COVID-19

- In the US, COVID-19 case numbers have been generally flat for the last two weeks, but the picture is mixed. We are seeing BA.2-driven increases in about half of states (particularly the Northeast) and decreases in the other half.
- In Georgia, case numbers have been quite low (nearly as low as before the Delta wave) and flat, but hospitalizations and deaths have continued to decline (by about 30% in the last two weeks)
- 56% of the Georgia population is fully vaccinated and 23% boosted (vaccination numbers are also decreasing in GA)
- Most all COVID deaths and hospitalizations have occurred among unvaccinated.

##### Influenza Viruses

Normally, Influenza A viruses circulate in animal or human reservoirs, however, any animal flu virus that develops the ability to infect people can evolve, spread, and theoretically cause a pandemic.

Currently avian influenza HPAI H5N1 is in the United States (since January 2022)

- USDA has a strong surveillance program to detect HPAI in commercial and wild birds
- So far, 160 flocks infected with HPAI H5N1 in 26 states (104 were commercial flocks)
- More than 24 million commercial chickens and turkeys were depopulated.
- No cases of human HPAI H5N1 have been detected in the US (now or ever, but we continue to monitor.)

##### Avian influenza HPAI Preparedness in Georgia

- Agriculture is Georgia's leading industry
  - Years of planning for HPAI with many partners: Georgia DPH, Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network, State and Federal Agriculture (GDA, DNR, USDA), Industry, UGA, Healthcare providers
- DPH's primary role is to monitor persons exposed to affected birds (employees, responders) for ILI (modified electronic system) and provide testing for H5N1 infections

#### IV. Board Comments

Dr. Curran had two questions for Dr. Drenzek: When you do you recommend the second booster and what may happen to omicron BA.2?



Dr. Drenzek informed that the booster is of primary importance regarding the impact on hospitalization reduction, especially for individuals over 50 years of age and immunocompromised. About Covid-19, she commented that it is interesting that some countries have a mixture of conditions, some increases and decreases occurred, and the data currently suggests that we should not expect a huge surge of Omicron BA.2 over time.

Dr. Mercer asked about antiviral treatments.

Dr. Drenzek responded that some of the antiviral treatments had limited impact on BA.2. but additional information will be sent to the Board members.

Dr. Cheek inquired if there is any prediction for the flu season in GA at this time.

Dr. Drenzek answered that an interesting fact about the flu season in Georgia is that the last year with social distancing, remote working and masking we had virtually no flu at all, this year we will see more flu cases, and the next year we will see a more "normal" flu season.

Dr. Cheek asked about some data of flu vaccine uptake in GA compared to last year. Dr. Drenzek is going to send the information to the Board Members.


V. Additional Comments

Dr. Chris Rustin, on behalf of Dr. Toomey, thanked Megan Andrews and Katie Smith for all the work during this legislative session.


VI. Adjournment:

There being no further business to be brought before the board, Dr. Curran motioned for adjournment of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Curran adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

THESE MINUTES ARE HEREBY APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS THE 10<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MAY 2022.



James Curran, M.D.  
Chair



Misael Rodriguez, M.D.  
Secretary

Official Attachments:

1. List of Attendees
2. Agenda

**April 12, 2022**  
**Board of Public Health Meeting Attendees**

**Board Members**

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**Attendees**

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Public virtual meeting.