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November 24, 2025

Dear IDPH Family and Public Health Partners,

As we enter this season of gratitude, I find myself reflecting on the meaning of **thankfulness**. How can we, in a time of rapid change and transformation, stay grounded in our blessings and honor the extraordinary people who make them possible? The answer, I believe, starts with saying it clearly and often to those who make a difference: Thank you.

Today, on **Public Health Thank You Day**, I want to extend my deep appreciation to each of you – our IDPH team members, local health departments, health care leaders, community-based organizations, sister state agencies, professional organizations, and every partner working tirelessly to protect and promote the health of Illinois's residents.

Public health is often referred to as "[the Invisible Shield](#)" - quiet, constant, essential. However, today, I want to do my part to make the invisible visible. Please know that your work matters. It saves lives. It strengthens communities. It builds a stronger, more resilient, and healthier Illinois.

Whether you are screening newborns, preventing lead exposure, promoting immunizations, supporting caregivers, or addressing complex issues like gun violence and climate change, you are the heartbeat that builds a foundation for a healthy future.

You are one of the reasons Illinois families can live safer, fuller, and healthier lives.

This past year has brought its share of challenges – shifting policies, constrained federal resources, and the continued rise of inaccurate information. Yet, through it all, you continue to show compassion and unwavering commitment. You are meeting the moment and helping us as a state and country move forward.

As your Director, your colleague, and your fanboy, I am profoundly grateful to walk this path with you. Thank you for your service, your passion, and your belief in the power of public health to transform lives.

Yours in good health,

Sameer Vohra, MD, JD, MA
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