



January 31, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Recently, the Trump Administration announced that the United States will leave the World Health Organization (WHO) and instructed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to cease communication with the organization. These changes create serious concerns, but the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) will use every tool we have to fulfill our collective mission to protect the health of all communities in the State of Illinois.

IDPH has a long track record of working closely with global colleagues in the medical community, at colleges and universities, and at both governmental and non-governmental organizations to gather information and share resources on how to respond to public health issues. These partnerships will continue to serve public health.

Nevertheless, as a pediatrician and Illinois' top health official, it is important that I communicate the ways a lack of federal coordination via the WHO may harm the State's public health:

- The US may lose internal access to WHO's global surveillance system, which provides the United States, including Illinois, with early warnings of outbreaks by monitoring disease activity in more than 150 countries. Without access to this network, Illinois could lose critical time detecting threats like new COVID-19 variants, Ebola, avian influenza, and more.
- Illinois may become less able to monitor new or emerging diseases entering the state. Chicago is home to O'Hare International Airport, the second busiest airport in the United States and a primary point of entry for international travelers. Public health teams at O'Hare, including those from the CDC, the Chicago Department of Public Health, and IDPH, could face incomplete data on infectious travelers, inconsistent health screenings, and greater risk of disease spread through one of the nation's key transit hubs.
- Illinois will now need to explore alternate tools and resources to understand and address global crises, obtain data, and quickly identify emerging threats in the absence of any confidential information provided by the WHO.
- The WHO also plays a critical role in identifying the right components of both our annual flu vaccine and other emerging disease threats. Lack of collaboration leaves states, including Illinois, vulnerable in our fight against emerging illnesses.

Despite these challenges, Illinois is a leader on the global stage with international partners from countries across the world. We are fortunate to be the home of several world-class institutions for global health, such as the University of Illinois Chicago, the University of Chicago, and Northwestern University. To solidify this asset and better coordinate our

global response, IDPH is convening a coalition of global health experts in Illinois to determine how to maximize our resources to protect the public health of Illinois residents.

Additionally, IDPH's robust, secure system of data collection and information gathering will continue serving as a resource to track health issues and communicate facts to the public with speed, accuracy, and transparency. In an effort to add to these capabilities, IDPH is exploring the procurement of other high-tech tools to even more effectively monitor global outbreaks and mitigate any related threats in Illinois. We remain committed to using the most advanced technology at our disposal to help keep residents safe, while still protecting the privacy of Illinois residents. That has not, and will not, change.

IDPH is also monitoring potential impacts to federal grant funding that are critical to life-saving research and public health initiatives in our state and nation. While there is uncertainty at the federal level, we will stay in regular communication as we learn more.

IDPH remains committed to open and transparent communication on public health developments. We maintain an informative website, [dph.illinois.gov](http://dph.illinois.gov), with data on a variety of health issues, including chronic and communicable diseases. The website includes interactive resources, including dashboards on respiratory illness and firearms violence.

The IDPH website also recently launched [a new communications page](#), making it easy for visitors to locate a variety of resources at a single location. Those include recent news releases, the department's twice-monthly podcast "This Is Public Health," and its public newsletter, "Health Matters."

I also encourage you, if you have not already done so, to follow IDPH on our social media platforms. This will bring you immediate access to reliable, up-to-date health information. You can find us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Bluesky](#), [Threads](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Our determination and dedication to the cause of public health has not wavered in the slightest, and we will continue to work side-by-side with you to do what needs to be done to protect the health and wellbeing of every person in our state.

Yours in good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sameer Vohra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sameer Vohra, MD, JD, MA  
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Illinois Department of Public Health