

For media inquiries, please contact:
Eric Macadangdang
Community Networks Coordinator, UrbanKind Institute
eric@urbankind.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh Network Members Submit Priorities for Next Allegheny County Health Department Director

ALLEGHENY COUNTY, December 7, 2023 – Over 60 organizations and individuals of the Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh (EJGP) network have submitted a letter to members of the Allegheny County Board of Health and incoming Allegheny County executive’s transition team regarding the selection of the next Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) Director. The department has lacked a permanent director since January 2023. Neither the county nor the Allegheny County Board of Health has publicly announced a timeline or process for hiring a new director, despite the importance of the position and the persistence of COVID-19 and other ongoing public health threats.

As the county transitions to a new administration that may be leading the search, the letter calls on the Board of Health and County Executive-Elect to prioritize several attributes in the selection of a new director. It recommends that the next ACHD director:

- Possess a proven track record in public health and in implementing a *social determinants of health* approach.
- Demonstrate previous success in – and an ongoing commitment to – urgently identifying, prioritizing, and addressing health disparities in all their forms.
- Possess experience successfully implementing policies and programs that address climate change to protect public health.
- Show evidence of – and an ongoing commitment to:
 - transparency, openness, accountability and public participation in budgeting and decision-making,
 - implementing data justice,
 - ensuring language accessibility and cultural humility as fundamental practices of public health,
 - building long-term, positively-transformational relationships with communities and being in service to them—especially those communities that continue to be overburdened and under-resourced.
- Demonstrate success in intra-government collaboration.

- Demonstrate a commitment to prioritizing health, security, safety, and well-being over profit in addressing current and future challenges.

Furthermore, signatories to the letter call for a public selection process involving stakeholder organizations. Recognizing the profound impact of ACHD on the community, they request meaningful public participation in the selection of the next health director.

According to Jason Beery, PhD, Director of the Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh network, “Our county faces many challenges that are directly and indirectly connected to public health. The diversity of the signatories to this letter demonstrates how important having the right person in this position is to community groups from across the county and to organizations working on different issues. Whether it’s climate & environment, data and technology, education, food, health, housing, immigrant and refugee experiences, livelihoods, public safety, or transportation, the signatories all agree that these are essential qualities and characteristics of the next ACHD director.”

This letter comes at a critical transition to a new county executive and administration. Signatory Noble Maseru, PhD, MPH, retired City of Cincinnati Health Commissioner and current Pittsburgh Black Equity Coalition member emphasizes that this letter “provides essential criteria for the next ACHD director. The recommendation emphasizes having a successful executive level of competence through demonstrated practice experience. This is precisely the expertise required to protect and promote the health and well-being of all in Allegheny County - those who reside, work, play, and worship in and visit our fair county.”

“This is a critical position within the County, one that guides and sets the direction for how we address public health priorities and needs for our 1.25 million residents. As such, we must recruit a director with expertise in public health, knowledge about policy regulations and enforcement, and has a demonstrated track record of collaborating with and prioritizing the needs of communities, especially those most underserved,” added Michelle Naccarati-Chapkis, executive director of Women for a Healthy Environment.

The full letter and list of signatories can be found at www.ejgp.org/bohletter.

Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh has been convened by UrbanKind Institute since 2020. EJGP is a network for people, groups, and organizations committed to advancing equity and justice to connect, learn, collaborate, build power, and create change across interconnected issues and places. Separately and collectively, the network push/es for equitable and just policies and programs to achieve transformational, people-centered change in Greater Pittsburgh. The network hopes that every person in Greater Pittsburgh has the resources, ability, and power to feel secure and succeed in ways that matter to them, now and for generations to come. Individuals and organizations interested in joining the network can sign up on the EJGP website, www.ejgp.org.

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