Director's Update to the Board of Health
May 2025

Improve and Sustain Family and Child Well-Being

Kindergarten Readiness

The Kindergarten Readiness Fair was held at Lentz on April 12. Partners from Metro Schools, The Nashville Public Library, the Nashville Zoo and other organizations helped make the event a big success. Back to school vaccines, birth certificates, oral health exams and other services were provided by MPHD, with MNPS enrollment occurring at the same time, ensuring incoming kindergarten students had everything they will need ahead of the start of school. The fair is held each year in the spring.

Promote and Support Healthier Living

Music City Behavioral Health and Wellness Summit

This year's Music City Behavioral Health & Wellness Summit was a big draw. More than 600 people registered for the event on April 14. It was an opportunity to gather stakeholders and behavioral health strategists in one place to discuss how we can better address our community's issues. A youth panel allowed younger Nashvillians to share their thoughts on the community's behavioral health issues, along with their ideas for solutions. Former Bureau of Justice Administration Director Dr. Kharlton Moore led the day as our Keynote speaker, sharing his perspective on the needs our community shares with other places around the nation. Nashville Native Jelly Roll, a musician with a personal story to tell, wrapped up the event.

Organizational Updates

National Nurses Week: A Time for Recognition

As you might imagine, National Nurses Week is a special time here. This year's recognition began Tuesday and ends next Monday. During this week we slow down for a minute to honor the contributions of nurses and acknowledge the critical role they play in healthcare and public health.

Monday, May 12, the end of the celebration, is the birthday of Florence Nightingale.

National Nurses Week provides a platform to celebrate the work of nurses and to ensure they are recognized for their indispensable contributions. We remind ourselves to continue advocating for the profession, to support nurses in their careers, and recognize their unwavering dedication.

This year's theme is The Power of Nurses. Locally, "Nurses Light Up the Sky 2025" saw, and will see, buildings lit red to celebrate:

May 6: Parthenon (Centennial Park Conservancy), NES Power Building

May 12: Tennessee Capitol Cupola

The MPHD Nursing Leadership Team will be providing a small token of appreciation to nurses throughout the week and promoting different national events.

Daisy Awards

As part of our in-house celebration, this week we named our first two winners of the DAISY Award: Jarrah Paschall in Preventive Health and Amy Powell in School Health. The award is given to extraordinary nurses for the compassionate contributions they make every day, going above and beyond expectations in science and sensitivity.
We are grateful for all of them, every day.

Federal Landscape

Grants

We have not lost any more grants since the Covid-grant-related cuts in late March. We have been concerned about several partial awards, including for Ryan White. The initial partial award was for about $850,000, substantially less than usual, and we were told the grantors were vetting the language in the grant for compliance with various presidential executive orders. We have subsequently been told by our project officer that HRSA expects funding to be restored to FY 25 levels eventually, which would be good news. But at this point that's only an expectation. We remain vigilant.

In the meantime, to preserve Metro's legal rights, we are attaching letters to all grant contracts that have been amended to include clauses that require, in effect, that we swear that none of our programs (to quote the contract for a tobacco control grant from the state) ``advance or promote DEI, DEIA, or discriminatory equity ideology in violation of Federal anti-discrimination laws."

So far, we have issued two of these letters. The text of the second one, to HRSA regarding the Healthy Start grant we know better for its local program name, Nashville Strong Babies, is below:

``I assure you that Metro Health is committed to compliance with Federal and state law, including the Equal Protection Clause, Title VI and the holding of the Supreme Court in *SFFA v. Harvard*.

``Indeed, Metro Health continually assesses our programs to ensure compliance with Federal and state law, including the Equal Protection Clause, Title VI and the holding of the Supreme Court in *SFFA v. Harvard*. Included in this assessment is monitoring court decisions about DEI and federal funding actions related to DEI.

``I further certify that Metro Health does not operate any DEI programs that violate federal anti-discrimination law. It is unclear what further certification is being requested.

``I remain at your disposal if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further.''