

## **100 years of public health in Ohio**

### ***The Hughes and Griswold Acts***

2019 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of two legislative acts that shaped the future of public health in Ohio. They established the model for today's local health departments and laid the foundation for public health efforts that are still in effect today.

The Hughes and Griswold Acts were a continuation of public health organization activities that began with founding of the state board of health in 1886. This was followed by passage of a 1906 law which called for each city, village and township to send a delegate to the state board's annual meeting, a place where many local health departments got their start.

As a result of the 1906 law, there were 2,158 independent health units in Ohio representing cities, villages and townships. The variety and quality of services varied greatly. After a statewide smallpox epidemic in 1917 and the influenza pandemic of 1918, it became clear that a more comprehensive and formalized approach to public health was necessary.

Hughes-Griswold eliminated the village and township units and made local health administration the responsibility of cities and counties. A uniform structure for each health district was established including boards of health, guidelines for potential board members, and the creation of the district advisory council, which appointed the members of the board of health. The process for combining districts was also outlined. A minimum of three full-time employees were required for each district: a health officer, a public health nurse and a clerk.

The legislation also spoke to specific "duties" for each district which included birth and death records, control and prevention of communicable disease, data collection, food safety, inspection and abatement of nuisances, and, as written in the original legislation, "all steps necessary to protect the public's health and to prevent disease."

As noted in the 1920 *Ohio Public Health Journal of the Ohio State Board of Health*, the power of the Hughes-Griswold Acts "strengthens the hands of those charged with responsibility for people's health as nothing else could have done."

**Over the past 100 years, public health has significantly impacted our health & quality of life:**

- People are living an average of 25 years longer
- Smallpox, once a common and deadly illness, has been eradicated
- Motor vehicle fatalities have been reduced by 90%
- Deaths from sudden infant death syndrome have decreased 50%

**We are safer today thanks to our ability to:**

- Control infectious diseases
- Provide immunizations for children and adults
- Use preventive screenings and tests
- Offer better maternal and infant healthcare
- Reduce the use of tobacco
- Grow safer and healthier foods
- Protect public safety through preparedness and response programs

**As part of National Public Health Week April 1-7, CCBH is joining local health departments throughout Ohio to celebrate 100 years of public health.**

Please visit [ccbh.net](http://ccbh.net) for more information about local public health efforts.