

July 30, 2013

Aldona Wos, MD
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
2001 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2001

Secretary Wos:

I am submitting my resignation as State Health Director and Director of the Division of Public Health, effective immediately. It has been a great pleasure and professional honor to serve in this capacity. I have never worked with a more mission-oriented, collaborative, and dedicated group of professionals.

For the last three years I have served in senior leadership positions in state government. These positions have provided a number of different venues through which I have made contributions to protecting and promoting the health of North Carolinians. I was the Executive Director of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund until it was abolished by the legislature in 2011, thus ending the state's investment in the nationally recognized TRU media and community-based youth tobacco use prevention campaign that resulted in historically low youth tobacco use rates. I served as the Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Eugenics Compensation, and I am glad to see those victims are finally on the threshold of justice. For six months, I was Senior Advisor to Secretary Lanier Cansler, and was able to participate in executive leadership and collaboration across state agencies. For the last 18 months, I have served as the State Health Director and Director of the Division of Public Health.

I am proud of what has been accomplished due to the efforts of leaders who came before me and current professionals within the Division of Public Health during my tenure. Through their tireless work, we have successfully opened a true state of the art facility for the State Laboratory for Public Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. We have successfully begun to implement a comprehensive Community Transformation Project that will surely continue to serve as a national model. We have successfully protected and safeguarded the public's health through national, state, and local outbreaks. We have made significant improvements in health outcomes in such challenging areas as infant mortality and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Under my leadership, we have set a vision and strategic direction for public health moving forward. The Division is focused on increasing efficiency and effectiveness of the organization with emphases on achieving Healthy North Carolina 2020 goals. We are encouraging the use of evidence-based practices and quality improvement methodologies, committed to enhancing collaborations, and addressing social determinants of health. Through an extensive study by legislative staff in the Program Evaluation Division, DPH has an additional outline for state and local public health infrastructure that is clearly in the best interest of good public health.

I certainly credit and appreciate Governor Purdue for giving me the opportunity to hold these positions, but I also appreciate being a part of Governor McCrory's administration for the last seven months. Although I have demonstrated the ability to produce accomplishments that require work and collaboration with diverse groups and across political aisles, I acknowledge that I have significant differences and disagreements with many of the policy and administrative directions that I see unfolding in North Carolina and in the Department of Health and Human Services. These differences are making it increasingly impossible to continue to be effective in my current role. Nonetheless, I ultimately believe that we all want to see the state continue to move forward.

To that end, I will use whatever talents and gifts that I have been given to continue in service to the state, but I will need to do so in a different venue. I thank you for your leadership and service. I thank all of the state and local public health professionals for their hard work, and regret that I could highlight just a few of their successes in this letter. I am hopeful about the future of public health in the state. As I move on to new challenges, I remain dedicated and steadfast in my determination to work toward improved health outcomes for all North Carolinians.

Thanks again and I wish you well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura I. Gerald', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Laura I. Gerald, MD, MPH

Cc: Mark Gogal