

7/18/20

Ravalli County Elected Officials and To Whom It May Concern:

Though I have been able to work affectively with people of many different perspectives during my 13 years as Health Officer, I am a point that I believe we must "agree to disagree." I did not plan to institute required masking locally. However, I feel that I have been put into another no-win situation by the locally elected officials' decision to disobey the Governor's Directives without my input. Masks are easy to use, safe, cheap, and (now studies show) effective. The way I see it, I now have a choice of 1) staying on but not doing what I believe is legal and best for the county, 2) directly confronting leaders whom I do respect, or 3) bowing down. I have regretfully decided to give my 2 week notice of resignation as Ravalli County Health Officer.

I would have liked to have stayed on as HO at least long enough to see us through this whole pandemic, but I am extremely proud of impacts I have had, independently and as part of teams we built in the county and the hospital, through the early phases of this crisis up to this point. I have always suspected that the fall or winter will likely be the time frame of the local peak. However, I believe that actions we have taken already, in the county, state, and nationally bought us critical time to gain plans, supplies, and team connections. Systems are now in place that can allow a reasonable way forward.

Though at times I have been frustrated with our differences of leadership opinions, I have mostly appreciated the chances I have been given to take responsibility for decisions, as the nonpolitical health expert. I am reluctant to quit, not due to any desire to retain any power, but rather because of loyalty to county residents and to the Public Health nurses, who have relied on my support and input.

Especially if a non-physician is tasked with the position of HO, it will be critical to have a physician medical advisor for local nursing consultation, especially regarding COVID case/contract tracing and management. Without this, I'm not even sure who would be responsible to orders and results of COVID tests on asymptomatic contacts each day. Therefore, I would be happy to make a move to something like "Public Health Medical Advisor." For me this would require, at a minimum, maintenance of my county insurance. In the future, I would also consider serving as Public Health Medical Director if and when Dr Ashcraft is ready to step down.

Sincerely and with continued best wishes for the health and safety of Ravalli County,

Carol

Calderwood, MD