

Study Resolution

Virginia Department of Health

Authorized by the Commission on November 13, 2023

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health is an executive branch agency in Virginia's secretariat of health and human resources with a budget of approximately \$1 billion for FY2024 and approximately 3,800 staff positions, making it the third largest agency in the HHR secretariat in terms of funding and the second largest in terms of staff; and

WHEREAS, VDH's mission is "To protect the health and promote the well-being of all people in Virginia" in order to achieve its vision of Virginia becoming the healthiest state in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of effective, transparent, and accessible public health services to all of Virginia's citizens; and

WHEREAS, the agency experienced a tremendous influx of federal funding for responding to the pandemic, which is receding as the risks posed by COVID-19 have subsided; and

WHEREAS, VDH has and will continue to play an essential role in the public's awareness of communicable diseases but has many other responsibilities, such as programs to support maternal and child health, dental programs, restaurant and food safety inspections, water quality, permitting, planning and coordinating delivery of emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, problems with financial management, for example within the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), have been identified in recent audits of the agency; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive study of VDH has not been performed for the legislature since JLARC's last review of VDH in 2000; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the operations and management of the Virginia Department of Health. In conducting its study staff shall (i) evaluate the adequacy and efficiency of the agency's staffing structure, how its various programs are organized and managed across the agency, and agency expenditures on administrative activities, such as procurement and information technology; (ii) assess the agency's financial management; (iii) evaluate the effectiveness of the management and operations of OEMS; (iv) evaluate the adequacy of the agency's information technology systems and staffing; (v) determine the extent to which VDH has invested COVID-19 related federal funding in improvements to agency operations that will better position it to respond to future public health emergencies; and (vi) assess the agency's programs for improving the pipeline of healthcare staff, especially nurses. JLARC may make recommendations as necessary and may review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Virginia Department of Health, shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.