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Sent: Tuesday, December 06, 2016 8:43 AM
To: AHS - VDH All Users
CC: Cohen, Hal; Dragon, Paul; Hutt, Monica; Reed, Frank; Costantino, Steven; Schatz, Ken; Menard, Lisa; Allen, Susan; Coriell, Scott; Martin, Trey
Subject: Announcement

Dear Colleagues:

Now that the dust has begun to settle after last month's election, it's time to respond to the questions that come with a transition in state government. During the long Thanksgiving weekend, I took advantage of the time to consider my future and, after a great deal of thought I made the difficult decision not to seek reappointment as Health Commissioner in the incoming administration of Governor-elect Phil Scott.

Such choices are never easy or crystal clear. My six years as your commissioner have been without a doubt the best job of my career. It has been tremendously challenging, and at the same time immensely satisfying – largely due to the passion and dedication of all of you who work at the Health Department. Both our day-to-day work and coordinated and effective response to urgent situations have earned the trust and gratitude of colleagues in state government, and of the people we serve.

It has been an honor serving as your leader under the administration of Governor Shumlin. Looking back over my time, there is much to be proud of. My accomplishments are truly your accomplishments, focused on our mission of protecting and promoting the best health for *all* Vermonters. Here are a just a few standouts from an extraordinary list:

- We led the state's public health response to catastrophic flooding from Irene, the global Ebola crisis, and PFOA in drinking water. This summer we again demonstrated our capability for effective response during the statewide Vigilant Guard exercise.
- We worked to change the definition of addiction from crime to chronic disease, expanded medication-assisted treatment, and helped set the national agenda for substance abuse prevention, treatment and recovery.
- We succeeded in funding, designing and building a new state-of-the-art public health laboratory.
- We established a system of performance management and quality improvement that pushes us to excellence, and serves as a model for other state agencies.
- We were among the first five state health departments to gain public health accreditation.
- And now with 3-4-50, we are inspiring communities to help make the healthy choice the easy choice where Vermonters live, work, learn and play.

I have nothing but praise and thanks for your essential role in public health. And while many of you know that I beam with pride and brag about many of our successes, some of my greatest satisfaction comes from the positive and effective workplace culture we have established – a culture that reflects

our passions aligned with our mission, that celebrates our successes, and supports that challenging and satisfying stretch in our work. The goal is simply to be the best place to work in state government. I'll rely on you to be the judges of that.

What can I tell you about the future? Based on our long list of accomplishments and dedicated staff, I'm confident that our public health mission is in good hands. The future is bright and will continue to be so under the next commissioner. I have no doubt that you will continue to see advances that match or exceed recent accomplishments. This will take continued focus on the evidence: doing what works and measuring the outcomes. It will require renewed efforts to put prevention into action.

In the short run, I will finish out my appointed term through January 5, and I will do everything I can to ensure a smooth transition. If needed, I can continue in my role on a temporary basis. We will have time over the next several weeks to share stories, kudos and farewells.

With change comes opportunity. I ask you that you guide your next commissioner through a journey of discovery as I have experienced – a journey that ends with a profound appreciation of the power of public health to make a difference in the lives of so many.

With great respect and appreciation,

Harry Chen, MD