

On May 11, 2023, there was a resolution on the agenda for the Health and Human Services Committee Meeting titled “FOR THE SULLIVAN COUNTY LEGISLATURE TO ACT AS LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND TO ADOPT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER NO.1-2023.” This document was a yearly routine, ensuring that the Department of Public Health had the authority to offer the county’s numerous summer camps assistance and surveillance with immunizations, and the authority to enforce immunization requirements so that all the kids, staff and public are protected from preventable communicable diseases. The legislature voted unanimously to carry this forward to be approved by the full board on May 18. On that day, the resolution was tabled. When questioned, the Chairman of the Legislature said that the resolution needed a minor rewrite and would be revisited in June. Instead, the resolution disappeared.

I feel apprehensive because our legislature has dropped this ball. What are our visitors bringing us this year? I understand that the topic of immunizations is tiresome to most and to some, infuriating, but I have to say that it’s better to talk about it, to act appropriately and to be prepared than to be sick and out of luck. Once again Sullivan County residents’ health resources are taking the back seat to political pandering. It’s one thing to have low staffing concerns at our Public Health Department, and another to have the Chairman blocking those who remain from doing their jobs effectively (which is to protect the public’s health, in case anybody forgot.)

It seems incredible that I should have to stand here to remind everyone of the importance of communicable disease surveillance and control measures, as the pandemic we have all suffered through took so many lives so very recently. Every life here in Sullivan County is important.