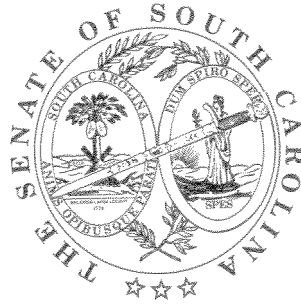


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EDUCATION COMMITTEE
FISH, GAME & FORESTRY
GENERAL
JUDICIARY

August 7, 2013

Governor Nikki Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Governor Haley,

Yesterday, I met with families and children exposed to tuberculosis as a result of the outbreak in Greenwood County. It was made clear to me that the parents are extremely dissatisfied with the timing of notification to them and with the response thus far. I write today to share their stories and advocate on their behalf for a single point of contact stationed in Greenwood County empowered by your office – a TB Crisis Controller -- responsible for getting the consistent answers and treatment these families need and deserve.

As a father of three boys in public school, speaking with these families was deeply emotional. To hear what these children and families are struggling with medically as a result of the TB exposure was compelling, but also to hear of the confusing and bureaucratic way they have been treated by state government in the aftermath of this public disaster was appalling.

The lives of these children and parents have been turned on their head, and not just medically.

One poor little girl suffers because of a reaction to the TB medication that not only makes her sicker but extends the length of her treatment. Two of the mothers shared stories of broken play dates and isolation for their kids because other families do not want their kids to be around a child who has been exposed. Another mother mentioned how her daughter could no longer go to her grandparents' house or participate in a family vacation because of the fear of exposure and the need for constant medication.

What made me angry was hearing about state government's continued failures to these families. One parent talked to me about repeatedly showing up for medical visits only to be told that she would have to

wait hours because a nurse was not available. Another mother told of being in the waiting room at a DHEC clinic and having the staff call out her son's name across the room and say that his TB medication

was ready. For a small community and a major public scandal, this exposure of her son caused her concern through no fault of his own.

The stories each of them told were the same: Repeated calls to DHEC that are not timely returned. Two-hour wait times on appointments for children. No consistent point of contact for questions about medication, or how to proceed with the treatment of their children. Families had to get a court order to force DHEC clinics to open up on the weekend so those infected could receive appropriate care. Push back from DHEC staff on testing family members and certain segments of the school population. And above all, confusion about what is now going on and why their children were allowed to be exposed.

The list goes on and on. We can do better. They deserve better. What appears to be missing is a single point of authority within Greenwood County for the families to get consistent answers and to manage this crisis in a consistent manner.

That's why I propose the immediate designation of a TB Crisis Controller to serve as the single point of contact for families dealing with exposure to tuberculosis. This position can be an existing staff position, or a new creation, but it's long past time that these families have someone to meet with to help them navigate through the government dysfunction.

The government clearly failed our citizens in Greenwood in this matter, and it's long past time that the State step up and stop making it even more difficult for them. Now is the time for leadership. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Vincent Sheheen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and a long, sweeping underline.

Vincent Sheheen

CC:

Senator Floyd Nicholson

Senate Medical Affairs Committee Chairman Harvey Peeler