

Who is Ohio's Coronavirus Contact Tracing "Partner"?

by Kristine M. Severyn, Ph.D., R.Ph.

In late April 2020, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) announced that it "partnered" with Partners in Health (PIH) to "implement" coronavirus (COVID-19) contact tracing across Ohio. Describing PIH as "a world-renowned organization that works to protect communities," ODH would work with PIH to increase the number of local contact tracers from a "few hundred to possibly nearly 2,000" (1).

While widespread coronavirus testing and contact tracing were touted as keys to reopening the country from the pandemic (2), such public health directives, especially widespread testing of healthy people, impede economic recovery. Based on sometimes inaccurate coronavirus tests (3, 4), citizens are unnecessarily forced into house arrest (5), small businesses shuttered, organized sports cancelled, and entire schools and colleges closed (6). This might explain President Trump's opposition to increased funding for coronavirus testing and contact tracing in the July 2020 coronavirus relief bill (7).

Ohio thus far has received about \$300 million for coronavirus testing and contact tracing for 2020 and 2021, courtesy of Congress's CARES and Paycheck Protection Program Acts for distribution across county and local health departments (8).

Who is Partners in Health?

Massachusetts-based PIH, founded 35 years ago, has a staff of 17,000 around the world in eleven mostly Third World-economy countries, e.g., Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Haiti. PIH works with local departments of health in these countries in health care delivery, contact tracing, and chronic health conditions (9). Co-founded by Marxist, socialist, globalist Paul Farmer, Partners in Health and the Clinton Foundation have Chelsea Clinton, Bill and Hillary Clinton's daughter, on their boards. Both organizations have worked together on common projects.

PIH asserts that "health is a human right." Its stated goal is to change and increase the influence of the public health system to eliminate health care inequities. They want a "real systemic health care change" for those who face systemic inequities.

Pro-life concerns

Partners in Health has a history of endorsing liberal abortion practices, having opposed President Trump's reinstatement of the pro-life Mexico City Policy and denouncing the U.S. defunding of the pro-abortion World Health Organization.

PIH and its supporters include a collection of progressive individuals and organizations that support abortion rights, e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, George Soros's Open Society, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, all major supporters of Planned Parenthood, which has recently acknowledged its racist, eugenic roots (10).

Globalist financial partners of PIH include Microsoft, Facebook, Apple, Google, Bank of America and the World Bank.

PIH receives major funding from drug companies, who promote potentially harmful birth control drugs and devices around the world.

PIH finances

PIH is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization with total income in 2019 of more than \$154.5 million, and total assets of close to \$100 million.

How is Partners in Health operating in Ohio and other states to facilitate coronavirus contact tracing?

Drawing on its experience in establishing disease contact tracing in Third World countries and Massachusetts, PIH established in May 2020 its "U.S. Public Health Accompaniment Unit" to operate coronavirus contact tracing programs in state departments of health and establish "long-term" computer surveillance systems.

How did Partners in Health become involved in Ohio's coronavirus contact tracing?

In a June 16, 2020 Webinar to state and local health agencies across the U.S., PIH described its newly-formed "Public Health Accompaniment Unit" (11).

Massachusetts, the home of PIH, was the first state to contract with PIH for coronavirus contact-tracing work, hiring more than 1,900 staff to "very quickly" support contact tracing, making over 300,000 contact tracing calls across the state. PIH also instituted a massive public relations campaign for citizen education and buy-in.

After its work in Massachusetts, PIH "did not want each state to contract with PIH. Thus, PIH formed its Public Health Accompaniment Unit., with the goal to "[ramp] up advising, learning spaces, and broader communication efforts to strengthen the national U.S. Covid response." Likewise, PIH wanted to help other states, cities, and communities "rapidly scale-up their coronavirus contact tracing and to accelerate the speed and ability to get to [the] scale required."

The three core areas of the PIH contact tracing plan are:

1. To assist local and state health departments to ramp-up contact tracing through “technical and implementation accompaniment;”
2. Build an online resource hub, a sort-of “library,” of best practices that local departments of health can use to further their contact tracing efforts; and
3. Leverage the learnings and collective power of its growing members to strengthen the U.S. public health system and epidemic preparedness to ensure preferential provisions and comprehensive support for those hardest hit by Covid-19.

Since early May 2020, PIH has conducted “Technical Advising” with groups across the country in Newark, New Jersey, the Navajo Nation, Florida, North Carolina, Illinois, and Ohio.

PIH says that coronavirus contact tracing may be necessary for years, even as the country reopens, as part of a comprehensive strategy to stop the virus. By growing the ranks and power of government coronavirus contact tracers, the public health establishment will grow even more powerful, a stated goal of Governor Mike DeWine (12).

How much is Ohio paying Partners in Health for contact tracing?

The Public Health Accompaniment Unit (PHAU), PIH’s program to support public health agencies across the U.S. with coronavirus contact tracing training and advice, received multi-million-dollar funding through The Audacious Project in April 2020 (13). Such funding currently enables PIH to provide its contact tracing services to states at no charge for about one year, beginning May 1, 2020. PHAU supports public health coronavirus contact tracing in New Jersey, Ohio, North Carolina, Illinois, California, Minnesota, and Maryland (14).

Indeed, the three-month “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Ohio Department of Health and Partners in Health,” dated May 18, 2020, and signed by former ODH Director Amy Acton, states that PIH’s services “are provided without cost to ODH” (15). This could explain the lack of response by ODH to public records requests for contracts and/or expenditures to PIH.

How will Partners in Health “partner” with each state?

PIH plans to provide “effective scale-up” of contact tracing across the U.S. in three ways. (1) Co-create contact tracing programs in departments of health through placing small teams of PIH experts for two to four months; (2) Provide technical assistance; (3) Provide an online “toolkit”

and learning community of best practices for sharing with other contact tracing programs around the world.

What is The Audacious Project?

Housed at TED, The Audacious Project is described as “a collaborative funding initiative” for large multi-year projects with “social impact on a grand scale.” Thirty-two donors currently contribute to projects selected yearly to “nurture a group of big, bold solutions to the world’s most urgent challenges” (16).

Why is Partners in Health not registered with the Ohio Secretary of State?

PIH seems to have violated State of Ohio Regulatory Contract Requirements, by asserting in the Memorandum of Understanding between PIH and ODH the following: “PIH affirms that it has all of the approvals, licenses, or other qualifications needed to conduct business in Ohio and that all are current” (17).

Ohio Revised Code 1703.27 mandates, “No foreign [incorporated in another state] nonprofit corporation shall exercise its corporate privileges in this state in a continual course of transactions until it has first procured from the secretary of state a certificate authorizing it to do so” (18). As of this writing, PIH has not registered with the Ohio Secretary of State as a foreign non-profit corporation.

It would seem that ODH legal counsel would have verified whether or not PIH was properly registered with the Ohio Secretary of State, per Ohio law, before the ODH Director signed a formal agreement with an unregistered out-of-state corporation on behalf of the State of Ohio.

Conclusion

Due to a multi-million-dollar donation to Partners in Health from the Audacious Project to fund scale-up of coronavirus contact tracing across the U.S. through PIH’s Public Health Accompaniment Unit, PIH is offering its contact tracing “partner” services at no charge for one year to selected U.S. states, including Ohio. After one year, it is unknown if such services will still be free, or if PIH will begin to charge a fee, similar to the State of Texas, which in May 2020 signed a controversial \$295 million contract for contact tracing services (19). While Ohio has “partnered” with PIH for start-up of contact tracing, the state, through the Ohio Department of Health, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with PIH on May 18, 2020 for three months, unless it is renewed. Public records requests from ODH yielded no payment contracts or records to PIH because the State of Ohio apparently paid nothing for PIH’s services. It

appears that Massachusetts-based PIH violated Ohio Revised Code 1703.27 by neglecting to register as a foreign non-profit corporation with the Ohio Secretary of State. Such registration is a necessary State of Ohio Regulatory Contract Requirement as a Qualification to Do Business.

Dr. Severyn earned a B.S. in Pharmacy and a Ph.D. in Biopharmaceutics at the University of Cincinnati, with a concentration in pharmacology, toxicology, and drug kinetics. She is a registered pharmacist who researches and writes on medical / legal issues, with special interest in public health and medical informed consent.

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