

Research Protocol for Strengthening Public Health

Prepared by the Center for Public Health Law Research Staff

MAY 2022

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

May 2022

Strengthening Public Health

- I. **Date of Protocol:** January 2023.
- II. **Scope:** Collect, code, and analyze state legislation strengthening public health, including bills enhancing the organizational independence of health agencies, creating COVID-19 task forces centering on equity, and empowering state and local health officials with more tools to act quickly during an emergency

This dataset is longitudinal and details legislation strengthening public health introduced between January 1, 2021, and May 20, 2022.

III. Primary Data Collection

- a. **Project dates:** December 2021 – December 2022.
- b. **Dates covered in the dataset:** Longitudinal dataset containing bills introduced between January 1, 2021, and May 20, 2022.
- c. **Data Collection Methods:** The data are among the resources being developed by the Center for Public Health Law Research at Temple University's Beasley School of Law (CPHLR) as a part of the Act for Public Health initiative, which provides direct support to public health departments and others through consultation, training, legal technical assistance, research, and resources to address legislation and litigation that weakens their ability to protect the communities they serve. Act for Public Health is a partnership that includes CPHLR, ChangeLab Solutions, the Public Health Law Center, the Network for Public Health Law (Network), and Public Health Law Watch. Lawyers from CPHLR lead the legislative tracking team of Act for Public Health. Support for this research was provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The legislative tracking team consisted of members from CPHLR, the Network, and partners from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Local Solutions Support Center (LSSC). The legislative tracking team worked to establish a process to collect, organize, and code bills seeking to limit or strengthen public health powers across six different domains: public health authority limits, the reallocation of public health authority, strengthening public health, regulating public health measures, state limits on enforcement of federal law, and public health preemption. The legislative tracking team defined the topical scope of these six domains and developed a coding scheme aimed at collecting standard pertinent information about the individual bills.

The team from ASTHO worked with a commercial bill-tracking service to identify and tag bills covering January 1, 2021 to May 20, 2022, fitting within the respective domain scopes and shared with the legislative tracking team a spreadsheet

documenting these tagged bills. CPHLR checked identified bills against a separate spreadsheet of bills compiled by regional attorneys from the Network, who reviewed state legislative websites and news media reports to identify potential bills in scope. Once the spreadsheets were merged, six lawyers from CPHLR assigned the tagged bills to the topical datasets in MonQcle.

Over the course of this project, ASTHO provided bill tracking reports on the following dates: January 12, 2022; February 4, 2022; March 3, 2022; April 18, 2022; and May 20, 2022.

- d. **Databases Used:** ASTHO received regular reports from a commercial bill tracking service; these outputs were confirmed by reviewing open legislative tracking services provided by individual states as well as OpenStates.org. Full-text versions of the bills were gathered from open-source state legislative websites; PDF versions of the bills were attached to individual coding records when available. Individual bill information provided by the ASTHO reports was supplemented by OpenStates.org and state legislative websites. CPHLR relied on the following sources for legislative adjournment dates for bills that Failed Sine Die: [NCSL 2021 State Legislative Session Calendar](#); [Multistate 2022 Legislative Session Dates](#) [note: Multistate has since been updated to display only 2023 Legislative Session dates currently].

e. **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Strengthening Public Health**

i. **The following bills were included:**

- A. A bill introducing a new statute, or amending an existing statute, that expands the public health emergency authority of a governor, state health official, or local health official.

ii. **The following bills were excluded:**

- A. Any bills that strengthened public health that were not included in the legislative update spreadsheets provided by ASTHO or identified by the regional Network lawyers.
- B. Pre-filed bills that were not formally introduced into their respective state legislatures or bills that failed before formal introduction (i.e., Wyoming House Bill 1003 and Wyoming Senate File 1001).
- C. Bills that only applied to condo associations (i.e., Florida House Bill 867).

IV. Coding

- a. **Development of Coding Scheme:** The legislative tracking team met regularly to conceptualize coding questions based on the background research and review of ASTHO reports. Coding questions were also informed by the findings produced by the Network in their report developed in partnership with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), [Proposed Limits on Public Health Authority: Dangerous for Public Health](#), published in June of 2021. The legislative tracking team worked to identify a standard set of variables aimed at identifying the

particulars of the individual bills themselves, to be asked across each of the six topical dataset domains. Each bill was coded in a single coding record, labeled by its bill number in the series title.

- b. Coding methods:** The CPHLR Research team consisted of six lawyers and two supervisors. Once the tagged spreadsheets from ASTHO were merged with the findings from the regional Network attorneys, the lawyers were responsible for coding the bills in the topical dataset tagged on the spreadsheet. CPHLR lawyers would simultaneously read the bills for coding and citing, and if they disagreed with the tagging on the spreadsheet, they would leave a note for the supervisors, who would make the final determination for coding, note the divergence, and raise it with the larger legislative tracking team for discussion if needed. Along the way, definitions and coding rules were logged in a shared document for the full team for cohesiveness.

Upon receiving an updated bill report from ASTHO, the supervisors would once again merge the results with the latest findings from the Network, and send along any new or updated bills to the CPHLR lawyers for coding. A new coding record was created any time a bill changed status in Question 1.3 (“What is the bill’s status?”). In the event there were multiple status changes on the same day, the latest status would be coded and CPHLR lawyers would add a caution note (i.e., if a bill passed the first and second chamber on the same day, there would be one coding record for that day coded as “Passed second chamber” with a caution note explaining both activities occurred that day).

- i. General coding rules:** The following general coding rules applied to multiple coding questions:
- A. The bill introduction date served as the effective date for the coding record.
 - B. Bill status updates in new reports from ASTHO were treated like a longitudinal update and coded as a new record for that new bill status.
 - C. This dataset covers the time period from January 1, 2021 through May 20, 2022. The valid through date for the most recent record for each jurisdiction is May 20, 2022. Bills that have been enacted, vetoed, or failed as a final status prior to that date were extended to that final valid through date of May 20, 2022. Some legislative sessions extended beyond this date, so some bills may have had status changes beyond this date. Be sure to check [OpenStates.org](https://openstates.org) or the state legislature website for the status of bills after May 20, 2022, for the most up to date information on their progress.
 - D. When a state has only one record in the dataset for the bill because there is no change in bill status between January 1, 2021, and May 20, 2022, but the bill text was amended within that time frame by action not amounting to a change in bill status, the most current version of the bill text was used instead of the version originally introduced.

- ii. **Specific coding rules:** Below are specific rules used when coding specific questions and answer choices for this dataset. These coding rules emerged either during the scoping phase, the coding phase, or the quality control phase. Only responses that require an explanation of coding decisions are listed here. Other responses not requiring an explanation are not included here.

Q 1. Is there a bill that strengthens public health authority?

- Coded “Yes” where a bill expanded the public health emergency authority of a governor, state health official, or local health official.
- Coded “No” where the only expansion provision in the bill was to expand the scope of practice for a health care professional.

Q. 1.3. What is the bill’s status?

- Coded “Failed” if the status of the bill is Failed or Failed Sine Die. For bills that Failed Sine Die, the effective date of the “Failed” status record is the date of legislative adjournment.

V. Quality Control

- a. For this dataset, CPHLR lawyers did not do any independent research to verify the completeness of the information provided by ASTHO beyond comparing the findings to that of the regional Network attorneys.
- b. Minimal quality control measures were used to verify the accuracy of the data collection and coding process. After data collection and coding was complete following the final report on May 20, 2022, the supervisors spot-checked records in each state as a limited quality control measure. Supervisors also checked the coding against the Network report, [50-State Survey: Summary of Enacted Laws and Pending Bills Limiting Health Authority: The Second Wave](#), published in June 2022. Any changes or divergences were noted on the master spreadsheet listing each bill, and any repeated discrepancies were brought to the larger legislative tracking team for discussion and resolution.