

McAuliffe names Levine interim health commissioner



Dr. Marissa Levine

Posted: Friday, January 24, 2014 12:00 am | Updated: 2:50 pm, Fri Jan 24, 2014.

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Richmond Times-Dispatch

Gov. Terry McAuliffe has tapped Dr. Marissa Levine as interim health commissioner.

Levine, who has been serving as a deputy commissioner, will lead the Virginia Department of Health, a vast agency with reach across the state.

Before taking a job with the state, she served as Henrico County's health director and was known as Dr. Mark Levine. She declined to comment on her appointment and its significance.

The department oversees a network of offices that tend to the health and safety of Virginians.

"The governor has asked her to serve in this role because she is the best person to serve as the interim commissioner and her qualifications speak for themselves," said Rachel Thomas, a McAuliffe spokeswoman.

The office gave no timeframe on the search for a permanent appointment.

Levine has served as chief deputy commissioner for public health and preparedness at the state health department since May, according to the agency. She previously worked as deputy commissioner for public health and preparedness and as director of local health departments in two districts.

She's a board-certified family physician who earned a master's of public health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a medical degree from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, N.Y., according to a biography an agency spokeswoman provided.

The health department's leadership has turned over a couple of times in recent years. In January 2013, then-Gov. Bob McDonnell named Dr. Cynthia Romero as health commissioner after Dr. Karen Remley resigned, saying the environment in the wake of new abortion clinic regulations compromised her ability to fulfill her duties.

Remley, director of the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health at the Eastern Virginia Medical School, said in a statement that she has worked alongside Levine when Levine was a local health director and at the state health department.

"She is an experienced public health professional and principled leader within the agency," Remley said.

"She has extensive experience in the diverse responsibilities of the agency with national recognition of her work in emergency preparedness and response, an area very important to the commonwealth of Virginia."

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