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FACULTY OF HEALTH

School of Nursing

4700 Keele St.
Toronto ON
Canada M3J 1P3

Tel 416 736-5271
Fax 416 736-5714
nursing@yorku.ca

To: Mayor Horwath
City of Hamilton Council Members
71 Main Street South
Hamilton, ON
L8P 4Y5

Dear: Mayor Horwath and City of Hamilton Council Members

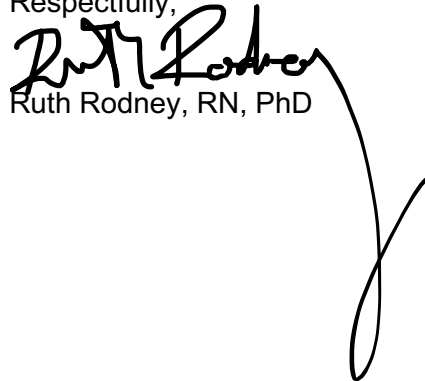
I am writing this letter in **full support** of Councillor Kroetsch's motion to **amend the composition of Hamilton's Board of Health to include community members and health care professionals**. As a registered nurse for almost 20 years, faculty member of York University's School of Nursing, and Hamiltonian, I am acutely aware of the complexities within our social and health systems that perpetuate inequitable access to health care across the city, particularly for low-income, racialized, women and gender-diverse individuals. We (as Hamiltonians) are always in a position to re-examine how and what we do to ensure Hamilton is a city that creates space for everyone to thrive. I believe reforming the Hamilton's Board of Health membership to include community members and health professionals enhances the expertise, lived experience, and diverse voices to better reflect Hamilton's growing population. While council may be faced with many difficult decisions, reforming the Hamilton Board of Health membership should not be one of them. Including health care workers on a Board of Health simply makes sense.

I am enthused that Councillor Kroetsch has recognized the importance of this issue and is bringing it forward once more for council to consider and pass. Prior to our delegation on March 22, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rKDIJulrq8&t=5475s>, Dr. Kassia Johnson and I spoke with Councillor Esther Pauls, Ward 7, and past Councillors Jason Farr, Ward 2, and Judi Partridge, Ward 15 to discuss the benefits of restructuring the Board of Health and better understand their hesitations, if any, to the suggested change in membership. We also attempted to discuss this issue with Councillor Tom Jackson, Ward 6, however his office declined. Our discussions with Councillor Pauls, Farr, and Partridge were fruitful and they acknowledged the usefulness of including health care providers on the Board of Health. Including health care workers on the Board of Health provides another measure of accountability as their knowledge and understanding of health issues, language, and terminology can counter what has been described as "*Bored of Health*" meetings. Moreover, my experience of logging on to delegate on March 22, 2021, and hearing defensive comments by some past council members before being alerted that delegates were on the call, including, "*McMaster wants to come and take over our Board*" meant that the motion was never given full consideration. Rather, it was viewed as an opportunity to exercise the power of their office in opposition of community members who brought forward a reasonable and practical improvement to the board of health membership.

Presenting the motion to reform the board of health was and is not about vilifying council members or the medical officer of health as it was originally described in 2021 https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScnXbqNCTJ81cfvUbn_vm9hFpMWTFpCQU6Vq0fSZE9i3AT_7A/viewform?fbclid=IwAR1gG8D-6JKs6FMc1UkhfPb1hfQf1Md3SJ_xGsLVy6J-GW_Z-z1nD48h3uY Rather, it is about improving health outcomes for Hamiltonians by recognizing that municipal public health decisions would benefit from greater engagement of local health care providers and community members. Moreover, municipal health boards that have similar membership models (i.e. City of Ottawa and Toronto) provide clear examples of the possibilities that await the City of Hamilton in better serving its constituency.

In closing, the foundation of great healthcare rests in the ability to practice with humility. This means consistently re-evaluating approaches and practices to care, listening to the needs of communities, and being courageous and willing to do things differently, especially when it means stretching outside of one's comfort zone. I ask that the Mayor and Council Members who, collectively, are in positions of power that impact the health outcomes of Hamiltonians support the motion to change the board of health membership and include community members and health care workers.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Rodney', with a long, sweeping flourish extending downwards and to the right.

Ruth Rodney, RN, PhD

