

## **Statement of Dr. Remington Nevin, Medical Director, St. Clair County Health Department**

April 9, 2026

I welcome the opportunity to speak directly to those following our work in St. Clair County. When I joined this department just under three years ago, I wrote in our annual report that public health was at a turning point — that growing distrust presented not only a challenge but an opportunity to rebalance our mission. I drew on an image from an eagle sanctuary near my former home in Vermont: the eagles kept safely there in cages, provided with medicine and care, outlived those in the wild; but unable to soar free, were they thriving? Public health, I suggested, had to grapple honestly with the cost to human freedom of the safety it was purchasing. That message has guided everything I have done since.

In the past two and a half years, this department has: issued formal guidance recommending an end to community water fluoridation on the basis of evolving federal science; become the first county in Michigan to offer a fully online vaccine exemption certification process, removing bureaucratic barriers to statutory rights that parents already possessed; updated departmental policy to affirm parents' right to opt out of state immunization data tracking, making clear that paper vaccination records remain a fully appropriate alternative; consolidated our clinical operations to refocus on our core statutory mission as defined in the state Public Health Code; and declined further participation in a state school clinic program that required staff to attend mandatory state-led training sessions in diversity, equity, and inclusion and other content at odds with the values of the families we serve.

Making St. Clair County healthy again means building a health department that the full range of this community trusts — including the populations that public health has most consistently failed by speaking at them rather than with them. Across Michigan, too many residents are unrepresented by local health departments whose values, priorities, and institutional loyalties lie elsewhere. I am committed to being something different, and I believe the trust we have built here demonstrates that a different model is possible.

Some coverage of this department has been inaccurate or selectively framed — a predictable response from those with a stake in the status quo we are challenging. I am not concerned by that. The democratic process has worked as it should here, and I am accountable to the residents and elected officials of St. Clair County — not to Lansing, and not to institutional bodies whose guidance our community has had good reason to question.

We are just getting started. I look forward to sharing more in the months ahead.



Remington Nevin, MD, MPH, DrPH  
Medical Director, St. Clair County Health Department



Elizabeth King, RN, BSN  
Director/Health Officer

Greg Brown, BS  
Administrator

Remington Nevin, MD, MPH, DrPH  
Medical Director