



Stephen W. Christy
Supervisor, District 4

PIMA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS


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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 15, 2023

TO: Melissa Manriquez
Clerk of the Board

FROM: Steve Christy 
District 4 Supervisor

SUBJECT: **Agenda Addendum Item**

Please place the following item on the Addendum to the Agenda for the Board of Supervisors meeting of February 21, 2023:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Discussion/Direction/Action regarding an update from the County Administrator and appropriate staff as to the continued employment of Dr. Theresa Cullen as Pima County's Health Director. (District 4)

Thank you.



Dr. Theresa Cullen to remain Pima County Public Health Director

Feb 14, 2023 | [Read More News](#)

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Pima County Health Director Dr. Theresa Cullen notified County Administrator Jan Leshar Feb. 14 that she has reached an agreement with Gov. Katie Hobbs to withdraw her nomination to lead the Arizona Health Services Department. She wishes to continue on as director of the County's Health Department, which Leshar has agreed to.

"I was honored to be hired as Pima County Health Director and I was honored to be considered to lead the state's public health agency. While the state job hasn't worked out, I love being Pima County's public health director and there remains a lot of work to do making Pima County one of the healthiest counties in the country," Cullen said.

Under Cullen's leadership, Pima County was a national leader in pandemic response, mitigation, vaccination, and recovery. During the pandemic, Cullen and Pima County:

- Built a robust system to track COVID-19 cases.
- Created a special unit called Care Resource Coordination that partnered with community organizations to provide and deliver food, diapers and other baby supplies, and prescription medications, to people who had to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposures or illness.
- Stood up the largest and most robust free COVID-19 testing program in the state.
- Worked tirelessly with laboratories and the Arizona Health Services Department to speed COVID-19 testing lab results from 10 days to 24-48 hours.
- Created a school liaison office to provide constant communications and support for school superintendents and principals. School nurses were educated on what to do with new COVID-19 cases to keep students and staff safe.
- Established critical monitoring tools for tracking and acquiring Personal Protective Equipment for hospitals and first responders.
- Coordinated the COVID-19 response with hospital CEOs and medical directors to give them the resources they needed to manage overwhelming patient loads.
- Developed clear, evidence-based decision-making criteria to respond to the different waves of COVID-19 variants and infections, as they rose and fell in Pima County.
- Stood up robust data dashboards to give local decision makers real-time information about the status of the pandemic in the County, including available ER beds, hospital beds, COVID-19 positivity rates, and more.
- Prioritized nursing home residents and the elderly, the chronically ill, homebound and homeless people, first responders, and teachers to be the first recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine in the County.
- Worked with regional partners to stand up huge vaccination centers to vaccinate thousands of people per day across the County.
- Established mobile vaccination clinics to serve stressed and rural communities whose residents faced barriers to obtaining vaccinations at the large drive-thru vaccination PODs.



Leshar said Dr. Cullen has earned the right to continue as the County Health Director through her inspired leadership of the department during historic times, her tireless work ethic and most importantly, her big heart.

"Terry Cullen deeply cares about the health and wellbeing of every County resident. Every decision she has made since she's been here, cussed or discussed, has been to protect lives and livelihoods," Leshar said. "We hired her because she's one of the finest public health physicians in the country who has had a distinguished career. She remains so, as does her career. Of course we want her to continue leading our public health agency."

Pima County Board of Supervisors Chair Adelita Grijalva said she was disappointed that a special committee of the Legislature's thin Republican majority chose a deplorably long character assassination of Dr. Cullen before rejecting her nomination on party lines.

"The state's loss will be Pima County's gain," Grijalva said. "I am proud of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Dr. Cullen's excellent leadership. We had lower transmission and death rates than most counties and the highest vaccination rate of all."

"The Health Department's responsibility is so much more than its COVID-19 response and one of the most disappointing aspects of the state subcommittee's decision was the singular focus on COVID-19," Grijalva said. "Dr Cullen's leadership and experience would have been a huge asset to Arizona. The strategic plan created under her leadership for Pima County is a blueprint for the State."

"All I have ever wanted to do was to prevent suffering, help people live healthy lives, and treat people with respect and dignity. I'm happy I still have the opportunity to do that in Pima County," Cullen said.