

Milwaukee Ald. Zielinski: Council approves creation of special deputy health commissioner position

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Ald. Tony Zielinski

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Today the Common Council approved a charter ordinance creating a special deputy health commissioner authorized to carry out key duties on behalf of the commissioner of the Milwaukee Health Department.

Alderman Tony Zielinski, the lead sponsor of the legislation creating the special deputy health commissioner position, said the move “fills a huge gap” that has existed in city government for years.

“The bottom line is certain public health-related duties imposed on the commissioner of health by state law in his or her capacity as the department’s local health officer could not be carried out by another staffer in the commissioner’s absence,” Alderman Zielinski said. “The Health Department’s recent problems under former MHD Commissioner Bevan Baker could have been minimized by having a special deputy and the charter ordinance we approved today authorizes the commissioner to designate a special deputy (qualified to lead a level III local health department) who may perform all of the duties imposed on the commissioner by law.”

“Given the magnitude of our ongoing, city-wide lead problems – whether in water, paint or soil – it just makes sense to have a highly qualified special deputy commissioner appointed to help better serve the Health Department and the

citizens of Milwaukee,” the alderman said.

A special deputy health commissioner designation must be submitted in writing and copies filed in the City Clerk’s Office setting forth the specific acts the special deputy is authorized to perform in the name of the commissioner. According to the legislation such authority may be revoked and amended in the same manner.