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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April 13, 2026

## Huron County Board of Health Temporarily Suspends Sewage Treatment Operation & Maintenance Program

NORWALK, Ohio— The Huron County Board of Health has approved a temporary suspension (pause) of Huron County Public Health (HCPH)'s Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Program, effective April 9, 2026. This decision reflects a measured and responsive approach to ongoing community and stakeholder feedback and pending state legislation that may significantly impact how sewage programs are implemented across the State of Ohio.

### Why was this decision made?

The O&M program was originally implemented in 2019 as a result of requirements in the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Administrative Code. The purpose of O&M is to ensure sewage treatment systems meet state-mandated requirements, including receiving routine maintenance and pumping required to function properly and reduce the likelihood of system failures, ultimately helping prevent contamination of groundwater and surface water and reducing the risk of disease.

However, the Board of Health has since considered several new factors impacting the O&M program, including:

- Community and stakeholder feedback regarding program cost, scope, and implementation;
- Feedback from the Huron County District Advisory Council, including the Huron County Commissioners, township trustees, and local municipalities; and
- Pending State Legislation (House Bill 692) which proposes changes to sewage treatment system program requirements, that could change regulatory requirements for sewage programs.

Given these considerations, the Board of Health has determined that a temporary suspension of the program is the most responsible course of action while additional clarity is obtained from the legislature. The Board of Health will continue to communicate openly with residents as this process moves forward. Additional clarification surrounding the temporary suspension of this program is included below in Q&A format.



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## **Questions & Answers Related to the Temporary Suspension of O&M**

### ***What does this decision mean for Huron County residents?***

The temporary suspension of the O&M Program only applies to routine O&M program activities. Many other essential public health services related to sewage programming *will continue* without interruption, including:

- Complaint investigations, including sewage-related nuisance complaints
- Enforcement actions necessary to abate confirmed public health nuisances related to sewage
- Evaluations and other related services voluntarily requested by homeowners
- Sewage treatment system designs
- Sewage treatment system design reviews
- Permitting, inspections, and approvals for new system installations, alterations, replacements, or repairs of existing sewage treatment systems
- Lot feasibility studies
- Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) projects
- Sewage contractor registrations
- Effluent and NPDES sampling

Conversely, the following O&M activities are *temporarily suspended* as of April 9:

- Initiation of new O&M program enrollments for 2026 or until guidance is received from the state legislature.
- Routine O&M evaluations not otherwise required to address an imminent public health nuisance or requested by the property owner.
- Issuance of notices or enforcement actions related solely to O&M program participation and compliance.
- Assessment and collection of O&M-specific fees associated with routine O&M activities on this list.
- Implementation of any new policies, procedures, or program expansions related to the O&M program until guidance is received from the state legislature.

Residents do not need to take any immediate actions as a result of these changes.

### ***What about fees?***

- Fees from 2025 services or 2025 reviews that are still unpaid remain due.
- 2026 O&M-related services and review fees (for services and fees initially charged January 1 – April 9, 2026, for 2026 O&M activities) are no longer due. Previously paid fees for 2026 services will be reimbursed (excluding credit card processing fees).

### ***Will this affect public health protections?***

Yes and no. If homeowners who have been properly maintaining and pumping their systems choose to stop doing so, there could be negative environmental impacts over time.

However, HCPH will continue to investigate complaints, respond to sewage-related nuisances, and take enforcement action when there is a known public health risk. The suspension is limited to routine O&M program elements and does not remove HCPH's ability to address urgent or hazardous environmental situations.

The Huron County Board of Health remains committed to protecting public health and the environment.

***Are these changes permanent?***

No. This is intended to be a temporary suspension. The Board will revisit its decision after:

- The status of state legislation becomes clearer.
- Additional stakeholder input is received/reviewed.
- A path forward that balances public health protection and community concerns is identified.

The exact timeline for next steps is unknown, but the Board of Health will continue to communicate openly with residents as this process moves forward.

***Do I still need permits for repairs or new systems?***

Yes. All permitting, inspections, and approvals for installations, repairs, and replacements continue as normal. Sewage treatment system designs and design approvals will still be required.

***Can I still request an inspection?***

Yes. Homeowners or home buyers may still voluntarily request evaluations.

***Does this mean I can cancel my services and pumping contracts?***

While HCPH is temporarily suspending O&M reviews that verify required service and pumping, continued homeowner maintenance remains a critical component of protecting water quality and preventing sewage treatment system failure. HCPH strongly recommends that homeowners continue to follow maintenance and pumping schedules appropriate for their systems. Sewage treatment systems are an investment, and system failures can be costly. Proper maintenance is essential to system function, longevity, and protection of public health and the environment.

***What if I have other questions?***

If you have any questions regarding the temporary suspension of the O&M program, please contact HCPH's Water Quality Division at 567-244-3239.

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