

# RI Health Director Alexander-Scott resigns: Led state's COVID-19 response from the beginning



RI Department of Health Director Nicole Alexander-Scott announcing the first case of COVID-19 in the state on Mar 1, 2020, with Gov. Gina Raimondo to her left.

(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/motifri/videos/599954260585364>)

Dr Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH, who has served as director of the RI Department of Health (RIDOH) since 2015 and spearheaded the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic from the beginning, has resigned effective two weeks from today, according to a statement from Gov. Daniel McKee, and the governor "regretfully accepted." She will continue in a consulting role for three months following her departure to assure continuity, the statement said.

Alexander-Scott had her own encounter with the virus, testing positive on Dec 12, 2020, leading to then-Gov. Gina Raimondo, Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor, and vaccine expert Philip Chan, MD, of RIDOH and Brown University School of Medicine observing a precautionary quarantine as close contacts.

A native of Brooklyn, NY, Alexander-Scott is a nationally recognized expert in her field. She completed a four-year combined fellowship in infectious diseases of adults and children at Brown University, after finishing a combined internal medicine and pediatrics residency at SUNY Stony Brook in 2005 and medical school at SUNY Syracuse in 2001. She obtained a master's degree in public health (MPH) from Brown in 2011. The statement from the governor noted that she is one of the five longest-serving state public health leaders in the nation.

“Dr. Alexander-Scott has been a steady, calm presence for Rhode Island as we’ve worked together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Governor Dan McKee in the statement. “Her leadership has been crucial to our whole of government response - helping Rhode Island become number one in testing nationwide and getting more people vaccinated per capita than nearly any other state in the country.”

“Serving as the director of the Rhode Island Department of Health has been the most rewarding experience of my career,” said Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott. “I would like to thank all Rhode Islanders for their trust over the past two years as we have navigated this unprecedented public health crisis together. It has been an honor to serve you. I would also like to thank all the healthcare providers and community partners who have supported the work we have been doing at RIDOH since 2015 to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be healthy, regardless of their ZIP code, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, level of education, or level of income. And finally, I would like to express enormous gratitude to the members of my RIDOH family. They embraced me, taught me, challenged me, picked me up when I was down, and had my back every step of the way.”

In addition to co-leading the state’s response to the pandemic, the statement noted, Alexander-Scott established the Health Equity Zone program that has become a national model for how to situate needed health care facilities in underserved areas in collaboration with local community leaders, led the response to the opioid crisis by getting naloxone (Narcan) into the hands of first responders and private individuals as well as opening some of the first harm reduction centers in the country, and arranging \$82 million in financing to replace the state health laboratory with a “new Rhode Island Center of Excellence for Laboratory Sciences [that] will make Rhode Island better prepared for any future epidemic or pandemic with improved public health services, be an economic driver for the state, and foster more collaboration with private industry and academic institutions.”