

July 23, 2020

Governor Charlie Baker
Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

Secretary Marylou Sudders
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

Commissioner Monica Bharel
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
250 Washington St.
Boston, MA 02108

Re: Strengthening the Massachusetts Local Health System

Dear Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, Secretary Sudders, and Commissioner Bharel:

We would like to thank the Baker-Polito Administration for your work in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and for keeping the needs and priorities of municipalities at the forefront of your response. Throughout this crisis you have taken steps to address immediate concerns such as ensuring locals receive funding to maintain critical operations and you have also thought ahead to address future concerns by signing into law [Chapter 72 of the Acts of 2020, An Act Relative to Strengthening the Local and Regional Public Health System](#), that will take steps to strengthen our local public health system. **We thank you for signing this bill into law and we support you in accelerating the principles of this law and moving quickly to further strengthen our local public health system in anticipation of a fall surge.**

We write to you as municipal leaders across the Commonwealth representing communities of varying sizes and geographies. We have witnessed firsthand the impact that COVID-19 has had on our cities and towns, and have watched as our municipal health officials have fought to keep our residents safe.

Our health departments and boards of health have played an integral role in a myriad of areas, including: case investigation and contact tracing, enforcing isolation and quarantine protocols, interpretation and enforcement of business guidance and state orders, organization and delivery of meals to food insecure households, collaborating and communicating with our first responders and public safety, and addressing questions and concerns of residents.

However, the ability of our local boards of health and health departments to respond to the pandemic has been hampered by a fractured system. Currently, each municipality operates its own board of health - 351 separate boards - that receive no direct state funding for core functions. This contributes to inconsistent messaging, interpretation, and capacity to enforce critical COVID-19 state guidance/orders. And with varying abilities to collect and report data, critical information sharing across municipalities is hampered. These challenges have led to inequities in public health protections for residents in cities and

towns across the state, and they put the entire state at risk, particularly as it comes to re-opening and reinvigorating our economy. Because viruses do not respect municipal borders, the extreme variability of protections provided across municipal health departments pose a risk and harm to all communities.

We appreciate your Administration working closely with local boards of health and glad to know you are considering options to strengthen and invest in this essential system. **We stand ready to work with the Administration to accelerate improvements to our local public health system. As municipal leaders, we want to see a system that provides residents, regardless of where they live, with basic public health protections and that considers the need for adequate funding to support the core functions in every municipality.** We look forward to working with your Administration to make improvements to our local public health system so that all our residents share the essential public health protections they deserve.

We support the Baker-Polito Administration's efforts to accelerate improvements in the local public health system, so that it is better prepared to meet current and future challenges.

Sincerely,

Kassandra Gove, Mayor, **Amesbury**

Michael Herbert, Town Manager, **Ashland**

Brian Keir, Selectboard Member, **Bernardston**

Joshua Garcia, Town Administrator, **Blandford**

Barry Del Castilho, Selectboard Member,
Buckland

Dena Wilmore, Chair, Selectboard, **Buckland**

Martin Walsh, Mayor, **Boston**

Louis DePasquale, City Manager, **Cambridge**

Andrew Golas, Town Administrator, **Charlton**

Thomas Ambrosino, City Manager, **Chelsea**

John Vieau, Mayor, **Chicopee**

Michael Slowinski, Selectboard Member,
Colrain

Mark Thibodeau, Selectboard Member, **Colrain**

Robert Armstrong, Chair, Selectboard, **Conway**

Steve Bartha, Town Manager, **Danvers**

Trevor McDaniel, Selectboard Member,
Deerfield

Nicole LaChapelle, Mayor, **Easthampton**

Mary Brazie, Selectboard Member, **Egremont**

Carlo DeMaria, Mayor, **Everett**

Yvonne Spicer, Mayor, **Framingham**

Greg Snedeker, Selectboard Member, **Gill**

Randy Crochier, Selectboard and Board of
Health Member, **Gill**

Roxann Wedegartner, Mayor, **Greenfield**

Ashli Stempel-Rae, City Councilor, **Greenfield**

Otis Wheeler, City Councilor, **Greenfield**

Joseph Domelowicz, Jr., Town Manager,
Hamilton

Robyn Provost-Carlson, Chair, Selectboard,
Heath

Brian DeVriese, Selectboard Member, **Heath**

Hilma Sumner, Town Coordinator, **Heath**

Philip Lemnios, Town Manager, **Hull**

Orlando Pacheco, Town Administrator,
Lancaster

Susan Chalifoux Zephir, City Councilor,
Leominster

William Glabach, Chair, Selectboard, **Leyden**

Jeffrey Neipp, Selectboard Member, **Leyden**

Michele Giarusso, Municipal Assistant, **Leyden**

Eileen Donoghue, City Manager, **Lowell**

Thomas McGee, Mayor, **Lynn**

Paul Brodeur, Mayor, **Melrose**

Marcella Stafford Gore, Administrative
Assistant, **Monroe**

Andrew Sheehan, Town Administrator,
Middleton

Michael Nelson, Selectboard/Board of Health
Member, **Montague**

Chris Boutwell, Selectboard/Board of Health
Member, **Montague**

Richard Long, Selectboard Member, **New
Marlborough**

Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor, **Newton**

David Narkewicz, Mayor, **Northampton**

Tony Mazzucco, General Manager, **Norwood**

Edward Bettencourt, Jr., Mayor, **Peabody**

Linda Tyer, Mayor, **Pittsfield**

Brian Arrigo, Mayor, **Revere**

Charles Sokol, Selectboard Member, **Rowe**

John Tynan, Selectboard Member, **Savoy**

Terry Narkewicz, Town Administrator,
Shelburne

Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager, **Shrewsbury**

Joseph Curtatone, Mayor, **Somerville**

Michael Sullivan, Town Administrator, **South
Hadley**

Domenic Sarno, Mayor, **Springfield**

Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator,
Swampscott

Doc Pruyne, Selectboard Member, **Warwick**

Jim Huebner, Selectboard Chair, **Washington**

Brian Domina, Town Administrator, **Whately**

Frederick Orloski, Selectboard Member,
Whately

Joyce Palmer-Fortune, Selectboard Member,
Whately

Jeffrey Hull, Town Manager, **Wilmington**

Austin Faison, Town Manager, **Winthrop**

Edward Augustus, City Manager, **Worcester**