

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2020

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In Anticipation of Fall Surge, Municipal Leaders Highlight Dangers Posed to All Massachusetts Residents by “Fractured” and “Inconsistent” Local Public Health System

Pledge Partnership with Baker Administration to Accelerate System Improvements

BOSTON – Today, 65 municipal leaders sent a [letter](#) to Governor Baker and senior Administration officials calling for improvements in the Massachusetts local public health system and drawing attention to the danger that is posed to the entire state by our fractured and inconsistent structure.

The signers include mayors, town managers, selectboard members, city councilors, and other officials representing 53 cities and towns across 10 counties. Signers include officials from Monroe, Egremont, Hamilton, Blandford and 18 other communities with populations less than 10,000 residents, together with mayors from 9 of the state’s largest cities, including Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Lowell, Somerville, and Framingham with a combined population of more than 1.2 million residents.

“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,” the officials wrote.

The municipal officials are echoing calls that have long been made by local public health leaders, including 159 who also [wrote to the Governor this week](#).

The letter cites the decentralized system of 351 separate local boards and the lack of direct state funding for core local health functions as sources of inconsistency in messaging, interpretation, and capacity to enforce COVID-19-related guidance and orders, as well as varying ability to collect and report data critical to public information and policymaking.

“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... However, the ability of our local boards of health and health departments to respond to the pandemic has been hampered by a fractured system,” wrote the officials in the letter. *“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.”*

The officials credited the Baker-Polito administration for addressing immediate concerns of municipalities and providing emergency funding for local health early in the outbreak. They pledged to work with the Administration to accelerate long term improvements in the system that provides all residents with basic public health protections and considers the need for adequate funding to support the core functions in every municipality.

38 legislators recently sent a similar [letter](#) to the Baker Administration.

Local health departments have been an integral part of the state's COVID-19 response, leading 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 first responders and public safety, and addressing questions and concerns of residents.

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