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Public Health Association Calls on Governor Baker to Take More Aggressive Public Health Measures to Stop Spread of COVID-19

Boston, MA – In advance of today’s announcement from Governor Baker about new measures to contain the rise in cases of COVID-19, Carlene Pavlos, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Public Health Association, released the following statement:

“The recent uptick in COVID-19 infections should cause serious concern for all residents of Massachusetts. We appreciate that Governor Baker has responded with additional actions in the face of the worsening data. But his actions to date fall short of what is needed.

“We call on Governor Baker to act more comprehensively and strategically to address this uptick in cases before a curve turns into spike. With the start of the school year in a few weeks, reducing the case trend now must be the highest priority.

“Responsible individual behavior is critical to manage this outbreak, but it is not sufficient. Stopping large parties as a source of spread is extremely important, but will not be enough. It is essential that the Baker Administration also address the underlying community and workplace conditions that are almost certainly contributing to infections and inequities, especially for essential workers, people living in congregate settings like homeless shelters and nursing homes, and residents of low- income communities and communities of color. Only by addressing underlying conditions can the state successfully reduce the number of infections.

“It is especially important that we approach this crisis as a public health emergency and invest in our local and state systems of public health. Our public health experts have the tools needed to provide effective education and enforcement to contain this disease. Police should not be enlisted as primary agents of public health enforcement.

“We call on the Governor to take these actions immediately to stop the spread:

- *Improve transparency about the data and metrics being used to make important policy decisions, which have been largely hidden from the public. This includes what metrics are being used to identify re-opening and re-closing decisions, testing sites, highest-risk communities, and adjusting the colors on the state dashboard for key measures.*
- *Implement the COVID data law signed on June 7th, including improving the collection and reporting of occupational and demographic data, including disability status and language which continue to be overwhelmingly missing two months after the law was signed.*

- *Begin proactive worksite safety enforcement – including investments in the enforcement capacity of our local boards of health and the Department of Labor Standards - that does not rely solely on the wherewithal and goodwill of employers to protect essential workers from harm.*
- *Continue to increase access to testing, especially for high-risk asymptomatic people and use all tools possible to achieve timely turnaround of test results, which is crucial for testing data to be useful.”*

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The Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) is a nonprofit statewide organization focused on eliminating health inequities and creating healthy communities through advocacy, community organizing, and coalition-building. To learn more, visit www.mapublichealth.org.