

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition, Rep. Pressley Call on Baker Administration to Resume Reporting of Hospitalization Data**

*Coalition fears administration will not fulfill budget mandate to establish vaccine benchmarks that consider hospitalization rates*

**BOSTON** – The Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition today sent a [letter](#) to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health requesting that the administration take immediate action to address a lapse in reporting of demographic data on COVID-19 hospitalization rates in Massachusetts. The coalition of racial justice, immigrant justice, civil rights and public health organizations is calling for a comprehensive, public explanation for why the State stopped reporting this data and information about their strategy to provide accurate, quality data and quickly reinstate this reporting. Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, State Senators Sonia Chang-Diaz and Becca Rausch, State Representative Mindy Domb and Somerville Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone are also supporting the Coalition’s call.

“Demographic data on COVID-19 hospitalization rates is essential for measuring the disparate impact the pandemic has had on BIPOC and immigrant communities and for crafting a targeted vaccination strategy that centers equity. We know that Black and Latinx residents in Massachusetts have continued to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 while also having lower vaccination rates than white residents,” said **Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition Co-Chairs Dr. Atyia Martin of the Resilient 21 Coalition and Next Leadership Development, Myran Parker-Brass of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, and Carlene Pavlos of the Massachusetts Public Health Association.** “Especially as the more contagious Delta variant is rising in prominence and pushing case numbers up again, it is alarming that the Baker administration has suddenly stopped reporting this data and not provided a thorough, public explanation for the decision or outlined a strategy to begin reporting the data again. In order to adequately address inequities, we need to be able to measure them.”

As of [July 22, 2021](#), 65% of white residents have been fully vaccinated compared to only 50% of Latinx residents and 52% of Black residents in Massachusetts.

The coalition is raising concerns that, due to this lapse in reporting, the Baker administration will fail to meet a new mandate included in the state budget requiring the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to establish COVID-19 goals and benchmarks by July 30, 2021 in order to achieve equitable vaccine distribution in disproportionately impacted communities. This provision calls for the administration to consider infection and hospitalization rates of different racial and ethnic groups into those benchmarks. Given that the administration has failed to comply with critical data reporting provisions of Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020, *An Act Addressing COVID-19 Data Collection and Disparities in Treatment* – which required the state to collect and report data by multiple demographics, including race, ethnicity, primary language, and disability status and was signed into law by Governor Baker on June 7, 2020 – there is precedence to fuel these concerns.

“For five months now, the Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition has been calling on the Baker administration to identify vaccine benchmarks that mirror the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color in order to advance a more equitable strategy,” continued the **Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition Co-Chairs**. “While we are disappointed that it took so long and required legislative action, we were relieved to see that there would finally be action on our request. However, there does not seem to be any feasible way for the Baker administration to fulfill this mandate if they do not have demographic data on hospitalization rates. This underscores the urgent need for the administration to implement a comprehensive strategy for reinstating this reporting and remain transparent with the public throughout the process.”

“Governor Baker must reverse course,” said **Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley**. “Collecting and reporting reliable, robust, and comprehensive demographic data on COVID-19 – including testing, cases, hospitalizations, deaths and vaccinations – is critical to ensuring a just and equitable response and recovery, and it’s imperative that we continue doing so. That which gets measured gets done, and scaling back the collection and publication of demographic data on COVID hospitalizations, while variants spread, will only hurt our efforts to address the disparate impact of COVID-19 on Black and brown communities and target resources to the communities most impacted. Grateful to Vaccine Equity Now! for their advocacy on this

important issue.”

“Governor Baker has been talking a big game about urgency in helping communities of color lately, but his flouting of the law requiring COVID data transparency tells a different story,” said **Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz**. “Communities of color pushed hard to win this law last summer, to shine a light on racial and ethnic disparities – because we know that we can’t manage what we don’t measure. A year plus later, the Baker Administration is still not in compliance, and is now openly admitting they’re not even trying to get it right. It’s a moral outrage and derelict management.”

“We cannot mitigate what the Baker Administration refuses to measure,” commented **Senator Becca Rausch**. “With the rise of Delta, other COVID-19 variants, and breakthrough cases among vaccinated individuals, this pandemic still requires a robust public health response that centers the most vulnerable populations in our Commonwealth. Failing to report race and ethnicity data of hospitalized COVID-19 patients not only violates statutory law that the Governor himself signed, it compromises the transparency and accountability of the Administration’s response to this crisis and directly thwarts efforts to advance equity in COVID mitigation and vaccination.”

“We need an administration that is tracking vaccine equity every day, reporting on it, sharing it with the public, and making it their number one priority. Our state’s vaccination numbers tell a tale of two Commonwealths, for our Black and brown communities, we are not succeeding,” said **Representative Mindy Domb**. “Data lets us understand the impact on these communities, assess our effectiveness at improving health and reducing impact, and monitor our progress. With so little progress, we need the data even more to better understand where we need to go. Yesterday at the joint committee hearing on vaccination in children under 12, we heard from experts in the Commonwealth about the need to immediately restore the hospitalization data by race and ethnicity – as an equity issue. I join with my colleagues, with public health advocates, and with residents of these hard hit communities to demand attention and focus on vaccine equity. That starts with restoring this data, and also looking at the ways other race and ethnicity data can contribute to our equity efforts and build understanding and vaccine acceptance in our commonwealth.”

The [letter](#) was signed by Vaccine Equity Now! Coalition Co-Chairs Dr. Atyia Martin of the Resilient 21 Coalition and Next Leadership Development, Myran Parker-Brass of the

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, and Carlene Pavlos of the Massachusetts Public Health Association, as well as coalition members: Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone, City of Somerville; Samuel M. Gebru, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts; Nakia Navarro, Building Audacity; Karen Chen, Chinese Progressive Association; Helena DaSilva Hughes, Immigrants' Assistance Center (IAC); Mohammed Missouri, Jetpac Resource Center; Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, Lawyers for Civil Rights; Diana Rastegayeva and Tom Rawson, Massachusetts COVID Vaccination Help; Ronnie Millar, Patricia Sobalvarro, and Dr. Natalicia Tracy, Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative; Renee Ledbetter, NAACP New Bedford branch; Gabriel Camacho, United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1445; and Gina Plata-Nino, Worcester Together.

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