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**Public Health Leaders Praise Legislature’s Investment in Local
Public Health,
Call for Additional Policy Fixes for Broken System**

BOSTON, MA – Today, the Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) issued the following statement in response to the release of the House and Senate Conference Committee’s ARPA bill, which allocates \$200M towards improving the state’s local public health system.

“This marks a major step forward in the effort to transform our dangerously inadequate and inequitable local public health system,” said **Maddie Ribble, Director of Public Policy at the Massachusetts Public Health Association**. “Thanks to the funding allocated in this bill, Massachusetts will move closer to a 21st-century local public health system that our state can be proud of. We are extremely grateful for the support of Senate President Spilka, House Speaker Mariano, Chair Rodrigues, Chair Michlewitz, Chair Hunt, and Chair Decker for their support of these critical investments, as well as for the unflinching leadership of Sen. Comerford, Chair Garlick, and Rep. Kane.”

“We are disappointed that essential policy reforms to address the significant structural challenges in our local health system were not included in the final conference bill. As a result, it is more critical than ever that the SAPHE 2.0 legislation is passed quickly into law,” said Ribble. “Funding is only part of the solution. To really fix this broken system, we must implement the policy changes that are desperately needed, as well.”

“This bill represents major progress for the residents of Massachusetts, but also leaves significant unfinished business,” continued Ribble. “We are heartened by a growing consensus about the need for policy reforms to fix our local health system, and we look forward to working closely with committed champions in the House and the Senate to move this policy as quickly as possible. Given the ongoing threats from COVID-19 and the tremendous number of other responsibilities that local boards of health have for the wellbeing of our residents, there is significant urgency to moving these reforms through the legislative process. We urge the legislature to make these reforms a top priority in 2022.”

MPHA is part of a coalition of public health experts, local and state officials, and academic leaders that have been calling for an infusion of federal funding to transform Massachusetts’ local public health system. The group has asked the Legislature to invest American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds coming to Massachusetts from the federal government towards building a

local public health system that is equitable, efficient and effective. The funding would be used to:

- Establish integrated, 21st century data systems
- Invest in workforce development to ensure that every community benefits from the expertise of trained professionals, and
- Eliminate the significant inequities in public health services and capacity between municipalities

The coalition has also called for passage of the Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community Act (SAPHE 2.0), which would create minimum public health standards for every community, incentivize municipalities to share services, create a uniform data collection and reporting system, and dedicate state funding to support local boards of health and health departments.

Together with the SAPHE 2.0 legislation, the investment announced today will implement the unanimous recommendations of the 2019 Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health.

The Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) is a nonprofit organization that promotes a healthy Massachusetts through advocacy, community organizing, and coalition building. We are leaders in the movement to create health equity by addressing the root causes of health and wellness. We promote policies that impact the major drivers of health outcomes, such as access to healthy food, safe affordable housing, and transportation. We also advocate for equitable public health services throughout the Commonwealth. To learn more, visit www.mapublichealth.org. ###