

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Advocates and Public Health Leaders Praise Advancement of Bill to Fix MA's Broken Local Public Health System, Call for Swift Passage of Fundamental Reforms**

**BOSTON, MA** – Today, the Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) praised the Joint Committee on Public Health for issuing a favorable report on the Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community Act (SAPHE 2.0). This landmark bill would create minimum public health standards for every Massachusetts community, ensure a qualified workforce by credentialing public health workers, 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.

“This favorable report from the Public Health Committee marks an important step forward in the effort to transform our broken local public health system,” said **Kristina Kimani, Assistant Policy Director at the Massachusetts Public Health Association**. “The SAPHE 2.0 bill contains the critical policy solutions that Massachusetts needs to ensure that all residents benefit from effective public health protections. We are extremely grateful to Public Health Committee Chairs Marjorie Decker and Jo Comerford for their leadership and support, as well as for the unwavering commitment of the bill’s three sponsors, Chair Jo Comerford, Chair Denise Garlick, and Rep. Hannah Kane.”

MPHA is part of a coalition of local and state officials, public health experts and academic leaders that have been calling on the Legislature to take urgent action to improve the local public health system in Massachusetts.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the dangerous weaknesses in our local public health system,” continued Kimani. “We urge the Legislature to take up the SAPHE 2.0 bill as soon as possible and pass it into law.”

“During the pandemic, municipal leaders have continued to be the front-line support for our residents. However, the COVID-19 pandemic also has revealed the inadequacies and inequities of our municipally-based local public health system—and this will put the state at ongoing risk as COVID cases continue to spike,” said **Paul Brodeur, Mayor of the City of Melrose and Vice Chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition**. “We applaud the Joint Committee on Public Health for advancing SAPHE 2.0, which will bolster and strengthen the infrastructure and the workforce needed to combat this virus, to manage ongoing public health needs that existed before the pandemic, and to prepare for future public health emergencies.”

The policy solutions contained within the SAPHE 2.0 bill will implement the unanimous recommendations of the 2019 Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health. The legislation

will also serve as a blueprint for the investments made in the recently enacted ARPA bill, which allocated over \$200M towards sustainable improvements to the local public health system.

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](http://www.mapublichealth.org). ###