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Public Health Leaders Call for Passage of SAPHE 2.0 Bill to Create 21st-Century Local Public Health System

State Must Respond to Lessons Learned During the COVID Pandemic

Boston, MA – Today, dozens of public health leaders, elected officials, and local public health professionals gathered on the State House steps for an in-person rally, calling for the creation of a 21st-century local public health system for Massachusetts. They urged the legislature to pass the [**Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community Act**](#) (SAPHE 2.0) in order to realize the vision laid out three years ago by the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health.

“Massachusetts is making exciting new investments in local public health,” said State Senator Jo Comerford. “But funding alone is not enough. We must also enact the significant policy reforms that are needed to create a truly effective local public health system.”

“Our local and regional public health system was fractured before, and the COVID public health crisis has nearly broken it,” said Representative Denise Garlick. “We have invested ARPA resources and must ensure legislative language is in place so those funds are properly used to build a truly equitable local public health system for every Massachusetts resident.”

“It has been three years since the release of the recommendations of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health,” said State Representative Hannah Kane. “Working together, we have made significant progress towards addressing the issues identified by the Commission. As the Legislature’s formal session comes to a close, we need to pass SAPHE 2.0 across the finish line.”

“Investing in public health makes good economic sense,” said Eileen McAnney, President of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation. “The local public health system is critical infrastructure that keeps our communities safe and our economy thriving.”

“It’s time for Massachusetts to create a 21st-century local public health system,” said Kristina Kimani, Assistant Policy Director for the Massachusetts Public Health Association. “We have the roadmap, thanks to the work of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health. Now we must implement it.”

Other speakers included Damōn Chaplin, Director of the City of New Bedford’s Department of Public Health, and Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager for the Town of Shrewsbury.

The SAPHE 2.0 Coalition is calling for immediate passage of the [**Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community Act**](#) (SAPHE 2.0) to ensure that public health protections are provided to every Massachusetts resident, regardless of race, income or zip code. The Commonwealth's current local public health system, organized through 351 municipal health departments and boards of health, is both inefficient and inequitable.

The SAPHE 2.0 Act builds on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic by 1) directing the Department of Public Health to establish minimum standards for local public health departments and boards of health, 2) setting out a clear timeline for communities to reach those standards, 3) dedicating state funding to support local public health programs, 4) providing incentives for municipalities to share services, and 5) creating a uniform data collection and reporting system to ensure that timely decisions can be made based on accurate and consistent data.

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. ###

Note to editors: high resolution photos of the event are available upon request