The Committee on COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness and Management was created as an oversight and advisory committee to monitor and investigate issues related to COVID-19 emergency response and recovery. In June, the Committee released a report and 16 recommendations for ensuring that the Commonwealth is better prepared and more resilient for the next disease outbreak or disaster.

**FINDINGS**

"...there are stark differences and long-standing inequities between and within public health departments in the state's 351 cities and towns."

"The Commonwealth is one of the few states that does not dedicate annual baseline or formulaic funding to local public health departments."

"While some cities and towns have well-funded, professionally-staffed local public health departments, some local boards of health are staffed solely by volunteers, and others have only a single part time staff member. This is always dangerous for public health, and during the pandemic the consequences were severe."

"While [public health excellence] grants remain helpful, the Commonwealth still lacks a robust public health infrastructure capable of fully executing on needed disease surveillance and enforcement, and large-scale vaccine administration..."

**RECOMMENDATION 3: STRENGTHEN LOCAL & REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

"The Committee recommends strengthening local and regional public health infrastructure so local officials can lead and plan for local emergency response. This will require sufficient funding streams and expanding regional initiatives."

"The Committee recommends the permanent establishment of a statutory framework for the funding, with local public health agencies required to meet quality standards."

"The Commonwealth must enact legislation that would set statewide standards and provide funds to ensure that everyone has access to a core set of public health protections and that there are sufficient funds for robust capacity building and data collection."

To view the Committee's full report, please visit: https://malegislature.gov/Reports
THE POLICY SOLUTION:

SAPHE 2.0

Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community

The SAPHE 2.0 Act (HB4328), sponsored by Chair Garlick, Rep. Kane, and Sen. Comerford, is the critical policy reform needed to implement Recommendation #3 to guarantee that every Massachusetts resident – regardless of income, race, or zip code – benefits from strong public health protections. Building an effective and efficient 21st-century local public health system will help operationalize many of the Emergency Preparedness Committee's additional 15 recommendations to ensure that the Commonwealth is better prepared and more resilient for future public health crises.

THE SAPHE 2.0 ACT WILL:

- Establish minimum public health standards for every community
- Increase capacity & effectiveness by incentivizing cross-jurisdictional sharing arrangements
- Increase equity across communities through dedicated sustainable state funding
- Create a uniform data collection & reporting system to track statewide progress & protect public health

SAPHE 2.0 is Supported by:

- Baystate Health
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Blue Cross Blue Shield MA
- Central MA Regional Planning Commission
- Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- Greater Boston Food Bank
- Healthy Equity Partnership of North Central MA Inc.
- American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, MA Chapter
- MA Association of Public Health Nurses
- MA Environmental Health Association
- MA Law Reform Institute
- MA Public Health Association
- MA Association for Mental Health
- MA Association of Health Boards
- MA Councils on Aging
- MA Health Officers Association
- MA Taxpayers Foundation
- MA Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Metro Mayors Coalition
- National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter
- North Shore Coalition
- Public Health Institute of Western MA

...and many more!

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