

2023 – 2024 MPHA Policy Agenda

The Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) seeks to eliminate all forms of structural inequityⁱ that affect health through advocacy, coalition building, and partnership with communities most impacted by oppression. We will advance the following policy priorities through legislative and administrative advocacy. In addition, MPHA works to harness the power of the healthcare system to influence policymaking on the social determinants of health – factors such as access to healthy food, the availability of safe affordable housing, and public transportation for accessing education, jobs, and medical care, which contribute enormously to the health outcomes of individuals and communities.

Transportation Justice

Structuring public transportation to be a well-integrated statewide system that gets all residents – particularly people of color, low-income people, people with limited mobility, and people living within a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) service area – where they need to go.

- Secure dedicated, sustainable, and progressive funding for RTAs to preserve, expand and electrify transit service
- Ensure equitable investment of Fair Share revenue to build and maintain transit infrastructure in environmental justice communities
- Promote accountability to riders in the oversight of transit agencies
- Implement free, means-tested, and other affordable fare structures that increase rider access to MBTA and RTA services

Public Health Infrastructure

Transforming the landscape of local public health departments to ensure that all residents – regardless of race, income, or zip code – have access to public health services, like communicable disease control, food and housing safety, and protection from harmful environmental exposures.

- Successful implementationⁱⁱ of the Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community Act (SAPHE) 2.0 legislation to establish foundational statewide public health standards, ensure a qualified workforce by credentialing public health workers, incentivize municipalities to share services, create a uniform data collection and reporting system
- Increase state funding to support local boards of health and health departments

Housing Justice

Promoting inclusive communities where all residents can find stable, affordable housing, and shifting decision-making power to residents who have been harmed by housing policies and practices shaped by structural racism.

- Lift the statewide ban on rent control to allow municipalities to enact local policy based on the needs of each community
- Keep people housed by preserving existing affordable housing stock through tenant ownership and improving the quality of housing
- Prevent displacement by expanding tenant and homeowner supports and increasing legal representation in eviction proceedings

- Increase access to housing through CORI and eviction record sealing, inclusionary land use practices, and development of new, affordable, low-threshold housing

Environmental Justice

Building power in communities experiencing high concentrations of pollution, including low-income communities, communities of color, and English as an additional language (EAL) households, to advance and enforce climate policy that prevents and mitigates the public health impacts of environmental racism.

- Reduce pollution, disease, and public health emergencies in environmental justice communities by passing legislation to increase community oversight in the siting of energy facilities
- Increase legal remedies available to individuals harmed by government policies or actions by expanding state civil rights protections
- Expand indoor and outdoor air quality monitoring and enforcement in environmental justice communities

Sustainable Food Systems

Ensuring that all communities have access to healthy, affordable foods and addressing the legacy of racism within food systems, including who controls production and how food is distributed.

- Sustain funding for the Massachusetts Food Trust Program to support food retailers in low-income communities
- Sustain funding for the Mass in Motion Program to promote opportunities for healthy eating and active living

In Solidarity

Following the lead of trusted partners to advance policies that promote community stability and health for all people, including people of color, immigrants, people who are poor, older adults, youth, LGBTQ+ people, women, people with disabilities, and others impacted by oppression.

- Public health strategies to address drug use and misuse including harm reduction and overdose prevention, addressing the root causes of substance use disorder, and decreasing reliance on prisons and policing
- Trauma-informed violence prevention strategies that do not expand the carceral system
- Improve access to the full continuum of culturally and linguistically appropriate behavioral health supports, especially for youth and older adults
- Reproductive justice policies that support the right to bodily autonomy, the right to have or not have children, and the right to parent children in safe and sustainable communitiesⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ MPHA leads with dismantling structural racism in these efforts; however, our analysis and strategy to address structural racism is used as a framework to tackle the intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination that affect health, including classism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and xenophobia, among others. Our policy platform is developed in collaboration with the MPHA Policy Council, the MPHA Board of Directors, and trusted allies.

ⁱⁱ At the time of this writing, SAPHE 2.0 is pending in the legislature. If SAPHE 2.0 does not become law in 2022, we will seek to pass and implement the legislation in 2023.

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from Sister Song.