



April 10, 2023

The Honorable Karen Spilka, Senate President
The Honorable Ronald Mariano, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Julian Cyr, Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
The Honorable Marjorie Decker, Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Chair, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
The Honorable John Lawn, Chair, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means

RE: SAPHE 2.0 Act – Local Public Health Investments and Reforms

Dear Senate President Spilka, Speaker Mariano, Chairs Cyr and Decker, Chairs Rodrigues and Michlewitz, and Chairs Friedman and Lawn,

As Mayors, Town Administrators, elected and appointed Board of Health Members, Selectboard Members and Health Department staff from Western Massachusetts, we thank you for your leadership last session on the SAPHE 2.0 Act and for your dedication to local and regional public health by your allocation of ARPA funds. Your leadership has been crucial during the pandemic and will continue to be essential as we chart a course toward a more effective, efficient, and equitable local public health system for the future.

We respectfully request that you prioritize the SAPHE 2.0 Act (H2204/S1334), filed by Representatives Kane and Garlick and Senator Comerford, for early passage. This bill, which was passed unanimously last year, returned by the Governor, and then stalled in informal session, implements the unanimous recommendations of the 2019 Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health. SAPHE 2.0 is the roadmap to utilizing federal and state funds to build the 21st Century, fair and equitable system our residents need and deserve. We simply cannot build this system without the SAPHE 2.0 policy reforms: universal minimum public health standards, workforce education and credentialing standards, and a state-local partnership that ensures adequate and equitable funding of local and regional health departments.

Action is urgently needed. Too many of our health departments struggle to meet their statutory duties in inspection of restaurants, septic systems, substandard housing, summer camps, and lodging; eradication of lead poisoning, investigation and follow-up on infectious and zoonotic diseases, or nuisances to name just a few of our over 50 statutory duties. Funding through the Public Health Excellence grant program has helped 92% of the Commonwealth's municipalities enhance services, and this program is still expanding. But funding alone cannot solve the workforce shortages, lack of integrated data systems, or other fundamental inequities baked into our current system. We need the standardized policy reforms of SAPHE 2.0.

We are grateful for your support and efforts last session to pass the SAPHE 2.0 Act. With the end of pandemic-era emergency orders coming in May, we must act to strengthen the infrastructure and the workforce needed to exceed the *status quo* and to prepare for future public health emergencies. With the allocation of \$200 million in ARPA funding to achieve these very goals last session, we are uniquely poised to take this next step toward a more effective, inclusive, and modern public health system in the Commonwealth. The need for these reforms has never been more evident, and our time to act is now. **Therefore, we again strongly request you pass SAPHE 2.0 early this legislative session to allow the public health system to move forward and become the system needed by the Commonwealth's residents.**

We look forward to a continued partnership and stand ready to work with you at every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, City of Northampton

Mayor Nicole LaChapelle, City of Easthampton

Mayor William Sapelli, City of Agawam

Mayor Joshua Garcia, City of Holyoke

Mayor Roxann Wedegartner, City of Greenfield

Paul Bockelman, Town Manager, Amherst

Terry Narkewicz, Town Administrator, Shelburne

Kevin Fox, Town Administrator, Colrain

Lisa Wong, Town Administrator, South Hadley

Ray Purington, Town Administrator, Gill

Michael Slowinski, Chair, Colrain Selectboard

Anthony Suffriti, Agawam City Councilor

Randy Crochier, Gill Selectboard and Health Director, FRCOG CPHS Health District

Greg Snedeker, Gill Selectboard

David Ellis, Washington Selectboard

Donald Davenport, Hampden Selectboard

Amy Wang, Chair, Worthington Selectboard

Helen Caulton-Harris, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Springfield

Merridith Oleary, Health Commissioner, Northampton

Andy Cambi, Health Director, Pittsfield

Lisa Sanders, Health Director, Chicopee
Laura Kittross, Director, Berkshire Public Health Alliance
Phyllis LeBeau, Director of the Council on Aging, Richmond
James Wilusz, Executive Director, Tri-Town Health District (Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge)
Debra Mulvenna, Assistant Health Director, Westfield
Phoebe Walker, Director of Community Services, Frankly County Regional Council of Governments
Roberta Orsi, Chair, Pittsfield Board of Health
Katch Bacheller, Chair, Westhampton Board of Health
Elizabeth Kuzdeba, Chair, Leyden Board of Health
Fred Vohr, Chair, Shelburne Board of Health
Pat Levine, Chair, Sheffield Board of Health
William Rose, Chair, Egremont Board of Health
Laurence D. Cohen, Chair, Richmond Board of Health
Louise Maron, Chair, Richmond Board of Health
Melanie Ames Zamojski, Chair, Montague Board of Health
David Finck, Chair, West Stockbridge Board of Health
Robert Wespiser, Chair, Lee Board of Health
Matthew Puntin, Chair, Tyringham Board of Health
Peggy White, Chair, Board of Health Peru
James Huebner, Chair, Washington Board of Health
David Rhoads, Chair, Town of Adams Board of Health
Doug Telling, Co-Chair, Charlemont Board of Health
Erwin Stuebner, Vice Chair, Williamstown Board of Health
Cynthia Suopis, Northampton Board of Health
Elizabeth Massa, Chester Board of Health
Kathy Korte, West Stockbridge Board of Health
Elizabeth Kugler, Hatfield Board of Health
Darryl Darby, Peru Board of Health
Karen Boudreau, Northfield Board of Health
Jacqueline Choate, Conway Board of Health

Jessica Collins, South Hadley Board of Health
Mary Jarvie, Town of Washington Board of Health
Andrew Fisher, Richmond Board of Health
Kaitlin Rooks, Southampton Board of Health
Mae Tanner, Charlemont Board of Health
Claudia Ryan, Richmond Board of Health
Devan Bartels, Williamstown Board of Health
Marcia Miller, Leyden Board of Health
Stephen Rubenstein, Sandisfield Board of Health
Anthony Segal, Richmond Board of Health
Lydia Shulman, Berkshires Public Health Shared Services
Sandra Martin, Health Agent, Egremont
Alex White, Health Agent, Deerfield
Jayne Smith, Health Agent, Alford and Sandisfield
Matthew Fortier, Health Agent, Orange
Lauren Kennedy, Health Agent, Agawam
Edmund Smith, Health and Building Inspector, Code Enforcement Officer, Amherst
Bri Dupras, Lead Public Health Field Trainer, Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Thom Griffin, Colrain Selectboard
Sharon Hart, Public Health Director, South Hadley
Megan Tudryn, Public Health Nurse, Greenfield
Meg Ryan, Public Health Nurse, Cooperative Public Health Service, Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Arleen Read, Public Health Nurse, Shutesbury
Keith Manley, Title 5 Inspector and Soil evaluator, Worthington
Glen Ayers, Retired Regional Health Agent
Maria Arias, Social Worker, Pittsfield
Michele Giarusso, Town Coordinator, Leyden
Glenn Johnson-Mussad, Wendell Town Coordinator
Claire Rabbitt, Town Nurse, Heath