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February 25, 2021

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Public Health Experts Welcome COVID-19 Vaccine Oversight Hearings

Encourage Questioning of Baker Administration's Equity Policies

Boston, MA – Today the Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) issued a statement praising the Legislature for calling oversight hearings to investigate the Baker Administration's rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. MPHA has repeatedly expressed disappointment regarding the Administration's lack of engagement with leaders in the communities that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

"The COVID vaccines are an incredibly valuable tool in the fight against this disease," said MPHA Executive Director Carlene Pavlos. "But to bring an end to this pandemic, we must ensure that those communities with the highest rates of infection and death have real access to the vaccines."

"Black and Latinx communities have borne a disproportionate burden of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths," continued Pavlos. "Yet, we are seeing that they have some of the lowest vaccination rates in the state. There must be both accountability and change, and we applaud the Legislature for calling oversight hearings to investigate this and other issues related to the vaccine rollout."

MPHA would like to hear Governor Baker respond to the following questions at today's oversight hearing:

1. Yesterday your administration announced \$4.7m to support 20 communities identified as the highest risk. How will these funds be spent? What percentage of these dollars will be going directly to local community organizations that have experience and expertise in reaching residents in order to increase their capacity to support the vaccine rollout?
2. Racial justice advocates have asked for \$10m to be dedicated to funding community organizations. Will you make additional investments to meet this target?
3. The vaccine plan promised that an additional 20% allocation of vaccines would be provided to the hardest-hit communities. Why has this allocation not yet been implemented, and when will you begin providing additional vaccines?
4. What are your Administration's benchmarks of success on racial equity? Racial justice advocates have recommended that goals be tied to the disproportionate rate of hospitalizations among Black and Latinx residents. Do you support this as a goal? If not, what specific goals do you propose to set and measure?

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. ###