

Jessica Collins, President

Jodie Silverman, Interim Executive Director

June 14, 2017

Chairwoman Karen Spilka, Vice Chairman Sal DiDomenico, and Senator Vinny deMacedo
Chairman Brian Dempsey, Vice Chairman Stephen Kulik, and Representative Todd Smola
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Conferees:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Public Health Association, I would like to thank you for your careful attention to public health needs in the FY18 budget. We ask for your support of the following priorities in Conference Committee:

1. **Include SENATE budget sections 70 and 94 to continue the Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund (PWTF).** PWTF has increased access to preventive services for nearly 1 million people across every region of the Commonwealth. An independent evaluator found strong results and concluded that the program warrants further investment. PWTF does not rely on any state funding and will be funded by closing the tax loophole on flavored cigars. Funding will sunset and the program will be dismantled on June 30, 2017 without legislative action.
2. **Adopt SENATE funding for the Massachusetts Food Trust Program (within 7007-0300) at \$100,000.** More than one million residents live in communities with limited access to grocery stores. The Food Trust Program, established in law in 2014, would provide loans, grants, and technical assistance to support new and expanded food retailers and other job-creating food enterprises in low and moderate income communities.
3. **Include SENATE language for a common application for SNAP (food assistance) and other public benefits (4000-0328).** Increasing SNAP access will increase healthy food access for food insecure families, which is essential for the health of children and families. There are nearly 570,000 residents who are eligible for SNAP but are not receiving benefits. This language will direct EOHHS to identify the costs and systems implications involved in creating a common application portal for MassHealth, SNAP, and other public benefits.
4. **Adopt HOUSE funding and SENATE language for Mass in Motion (within 4513-1111) at not less than the amount expended in FY17 and \$4,010,977 in overall line item funding.** This program, operating in more than 60 communities, is improving healthy eating and physical activity in schools, and improving access to safe streets, parks, and playgrounds. Mass in Motion communities show a decrease in overweight children compared to the state as a whole. Funding leverages federal and private dollars.
5. **Adopt HOUSE funding for the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (4512-0200) at \$133,750,888.** The House includes new funding for the MA Access to Recovery program, as well as funding to build two new recovery centers; increase addiction treatment beds; and fund Narcan distribution to addiction treatment providers.
6. **Include SENATE budget section 99 regarding Public Health Data Linkages.** This language allows DPH to continue the data linkage model authorized in Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2015 for opioid-related deaths and to allow DPH to use the same model to investigate the risk factors of other pressing public health issues.

If I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at 617-697-2107.

Sincerely,



Maddie Ribble, Director of Public Policy