

SUPPORT LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH TODAY FOR A SAFE & HEALTHY TOMORROW

SAPHE 2.0 Act - Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community
by Sen. Jo Comerford, Rep. Hannah Kane & Rep. Denise Garlick

An Act to accelerate equity & effectiveness of our local & regional public health system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that our local public health system is not adequately structured, staffed, or financed to meet large scale public health challenges. This bill will accelerate improvements to this system, so that it adequately serves all residents, regardless of race, income or zip code. Faced with the inequities revealed by the pandemic, we must seize this opportunity to make change.

THE SAPHE 2.0 ACT WILL:



Establish Minimum Public Health Standards for Every Community

- All residents should be served by credentialed health agents & public health nurses. The public's health & safety depends on a workforce with special expertise & skills.
- Minimum Public Health Standards will be based on recommendations of the Special Commission on Local & Regional Health & on national best practices.



Increase Capacity & Effectiveness

- Incentivizes municipalities to share essential public health services.
- Cross-jurisdictional sharing among municipalities supports more effective & efficient delivery of services & increases capacity & ability to meet statutory requirements.



Create a Uniform Data Collection & Reporting System

- Directs the Department of Public Health to create a uniform data collection & reporting system to protect the public's health & measure how well our local health system is doing.



Provide Sustainable State Funding

- Provides funding for planning, technical assistance and ongoing sustainable operations. Massachusetts is one of the only states that does not provide dedicated state funding to local health departments.

THE SAPHE 2.0 COALITION IS CO-CHAIRED BY:

• Damon Chaplin, Health Director, New Bedford	• Sigalle Reiss, President, MA Health Officers Association Health Director for Norwood
• Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager, Shrewsbury	• Phoebe Walker, Director of Community Services, Franklin Regional Council of Governments
• Ruth Mori, President, MA Association of Public Health Nurses; public health nurse, Wayland	• Kevin Sweet, Town Administrator, Wrentham.
• Aimee Petrosky, Health Director, East Longmeadow	

DECENTRALIZED STRUCTURE OF 351 SEPARATE BOARDS OF HEALTH LEADS TO INEQUITIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH PROTECTIONS ACROSS MUNICIPALITIES

Because viruses do not respect municipal borders, the extreme variability of protections provided across municipal health departments increases exposure and harm to all communities, and puts the entire state at risk.

Examples include:



- Lack of funding and staff
- Lack of access to public health nursing
- Inconsistent use of Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network (MAVEN)
- Inconsistent enforcement
- Incomplete and Inconsistent data collection and reporting
- Unaddressed health inequities

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH: THE INVISIBLE & ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE DURING COVID-19

Massachusetts local health departments have been on the front lines of our state's response to the COVID-19 crisis, leading critical response efforts including:



Investigating suspected cases, making testing recommendations, tracing contacts, and recommending and enforcing quarantine and isolation;



Enforcing essential business orders & re-opening guidance and providing input to businesses on safe operating procedures; and



Coordinating with town officials, first responders, businesses, and residents, and serving as a communications hub between local residents and state officials.

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE SAPHE ACT AND THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH

On April, 29 2020, Governor Baker signed into law Chapter 72 of the Acts of 2020 – the State Action for Public Health Excellence Act, or SAPHE Act, which created a voluntary grant-based approach to improving the local public health system. The new SAPHE 2.0 Act builds on this foundation, and on the goals identified by the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health in their final report published June 2019 by directing the Department of Public Health to establish minimum public health standards, setting out a clear timeline for communities to reach those standards, establishing state funding to support communities in reaching benchmarks, and creating a uniform data collection and reporting system.