



Office of
Representative Hannah E. Kane
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

For Immediate Release

Contact: Anna Darrow, 617-722-2810, Anna.Darrow@mahouse.gov

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**Governor Baker Signs Legislation to Improve
Municipal Public Health Services**

Bill filed by Reps. Kane and Garlick helps coordinate local and regional public health services, including disease control, emergency preparedness

BOSTON – On Wednesday, Governor Baker signed legislation to strengthen local and regional public health services across Massachusetts.

The legislation, *An Act Relative to Strengthening the Local and Regional Public Health System*, supports collaboration between local boards of health and neighboring municipal public health departments to deliver high-quality and efficient public health services such as disease control, emergency preparedness, restaurant inspection, sanitary code enforcement, and suicide prevention and substance use disorder outreach. The bill was sponsored by Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) and Representative Denise Garlick (D-Needham).

“This legislation will work toward ensuring each resident of the Commonwealth has access to the public health services they need to live a healthy life, regardless of their zip code or the size of their community,” said Representative Kane. “This has always been important, but is now critical as our state deals with an unprecedented pandemic. This legislation will set us up to better respond to future outbreaks of COVID-19 by strengthening our local and regional health systems. Representing a town that is a regionalized public health alliance member, I know first-hand how effective and efficient sharing public health services can be across multiple municipalities. I am grateful to the Governor for signing the bill, and to House and Senate Leadership for supporting it’s advancement.”

Specifically, the legislation seeks to strengthen local public health in three ways:

- **Establishes the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) program:** A competitive grant program that provides funding to public health departments to increase sharing of services across municipalities, strengthen service delivery capabilities, and improve system accountability and data reporting.
- **Ensures the local public health workforce has access to training:** Provides boards of health officials and staff with free educational and training opportunities four times annually in regions across the state.

- **Sets new statewide public health standards:** The Department of Public Health will develop a set of minimum standards for foundational public health services to improve the quality of and create uniformity within the public health services of the Commonwealth.

The legislation builds on the work of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health, a 25-member body of public health and municipal experts established in 2016. The [commission released a 2019 report](#) identifying ways for municipalities to overcome barriers and provide quality public health services to residents in Massachusetts.

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