

Coalition: Use ARPA \$\$\$ To Fix "Broken" Public Health Systems

[Story Developing] Calling the local public health system "broken" and "dangerously inadequate," members of a coalition called on the Legislature Tuesday to invest \$251 million over five years to build systems that they hope will become equitable, efficient and effective. "Our local public health system is broken. It leaves people in small, rural communities and low-income urban communities without critical protections," Sen. Jo Comerford said. "The Legislature must seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to create an equitable 21st century local public health system that Massachusetts can be proud of." The outlay would represent about 5 percent of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds available to the state. The public health, municipal and academic leaders issued their call outside the State House as lawmakers held another hearing on potential ARPA spending and inched closer to offering a proposal. According to the Massachusetts Association of Public Health, others backing the request include officials from the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, rural and urban boards of health, and Reps. Denise Garlick and Hannah Kane. "Whether it's inspecting restaurants, protecting residents from substandard housing, or responding to cases of communicable disease, our local public health system is essential to keep Massachusetts residents safe," said Kane, a House Republican. - Michael P. Norton/SHNS

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