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September 21, 2021

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Room 208
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Vice Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 42
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Use of ARPA funds for investment in public health

Dear Chairwomen Friedman and Ferrante,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, and as a member of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health, I write today to offer some brief comments in support of using ARPA funds to invest in our public health system. I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide public testimony on this important topic.

The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation is a non-partisan, nationally recognized, non-profit public policy research organization whose mission is to promote the long-term economic well-being of the Commonwealth by focusing on the state's fiscal and economic health. We have a long track record of providing independent, credible, and objective analysis on important issues facing the state.

As a member of the Special Commission, I became aware of some of the numerous deficiencies with our current system of public health. The pandemic has only served to lay bare the wide variation in services offered by local Public Health Departments and the challenges faced by municipalities in standing up a professional, well-trained public health staff to meet the broad array of responsibilities that come under the public health department.

After assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of municipal and regional public health systems, the Commission made a series of recommendations regarding how to strengthen the delivery of public health services and preventive measures in order to bridge the gap between our current public health system and what we aspire to have. This 25 member body represented a broad

array of stakeholders representing different perspectives, areas of expertise and experiences. This diverse makeup of the commission led to careful, thoughtful and comprehensive deliberations over the almost two year period we convened and a set of recommendation.

These recommendations focused around five key areas:

1. Elevating the performance standards of local public health departments.
2. Delivering services efficiently and effectively by designing local public system in a way that encourages cross-jurisdictional sharing of public health services to strengthen the service delivery capabilities of local public health departments, take advantage of economies of scale, and coordinate planning
3. Establishing education and training standards for local public health officials and staff and expanding access to professional development.
4. Having the DPH collect data from all local public health departments in a standardized format to allow for the creation of metrics to evaluate performance over time.
5. Committing resources that will be necessary to meet the minimum set of local public health services.

These five categories align closely with the principles MTF developed for spending ARPA funds.

1. Sustainability
2. Prioritization
3. Evidence and Evaluation
4. Coordination among local and state government
5. Strategic use of funds

As I have said at previous public hearings in support of investment in our public health system, strengthening our local public health system is a goal to which MTF remains committed. At its best, public health is a vital public service, one which can reduce healthcare costs, improve the health and extend the lives of residents of Massachusetts and make our communities safer. The current pandemic has served to heighten our awareness of its importance, and I urge you to use ARPA funds to help improve this important public service.

Thank you for the ability to submit testimony, please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Eileen McAnney
President