



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

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COMMITTEES:

Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health
House Committee on Rules
Joint Committee on Rules

July 30, 2021

Office of the Governor
24 Beacon St., Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

As the Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health, I write to request that your Administration resume robust and precise data analysis in your reporting of key demographic data indicative of the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color. Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020 requires DPH to include race, ethnicity, and other demographic information in all its COVID-19 data in order “to understand the disparate impact of COVID-19 on certain populations.” We have achieved high vaccination rates on average across the Commonwealth, but the breakdown by race is a call that we have to continue to respond to with the same urgency. As we move into a new vaccination phase targeted at children and adolescents, with a simultaneous rise in the Delta variant, we must ensure that complete demographic data is readily accessible.

After seven hours of listening to community leaders, public health experts, and pediatricians at our joint oversight hearing on Monday, it is more clear than ever that we cannot fully see whom we are failing. What information we have makes it clear that we are failing communities of color, low-income communities, disabled residents and other vulnerable populations. Despite efforts made to address inequities brought about by the pandemic, these communities have maintained the lowest vaccination rates relative to their risk of infection. To date, the cumulative rate of infection for Hispanic residents is 3x that of white residents, and the rate of infection for Black residents is 1.5x that of white residents. As of July 27th, 51% of Hispanic residents and 53% of Black residents have received one dose of the vaccine and 65% of white residents have received the vaccine. We must continue to evaluate our actions when vaccination rates remain stagnant. If our efforts do not yield better outcomes for these communities, we are failing.

While I continue to support the efforts of your Administration, persisting inequities can only be identified and addressed with access to robust data. Because of this, I fully support a reinstatement of the dashboard to include a breakdown by demographics for all data, including hospitalizations. I also support providing granular, community-specific data that contains demographic information, as well as the joint reporting of demographic data alongside age. Doing so will allow us to make informed policy decisions by identifying service gaps and then

implementing targeted outreach. Even if these data are incomplete, they are essential in identifying both where we are falling short and how we can do better.

It is critically important that the aforementioned data is widely accessible, particularly when your Administration is leaving decisions around important public health recommendations to be made by local governments and school districts. Communities need this information more than ever to make informed decisions.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this matter, and ask that you reinstate the reporting of hospitalizations by race and ethnicity in addition to the other key indicators mentioned above. Further, I am available for a conversation to try to better understand why this decision was made.

Sincerely,
Marjorie C. Decker
State Representative – 25th Middlesex