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June 23, 2020

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Kenzie Bok
Chairwoman, Ways & Means Committee
Boston City Council
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Boston Public Health Commission FY2021 Budget Request

Dear Councilor Bok, Madame President Janey, and Councilors Essaibi-George, Flaherty, Wu, Mejia, Edwards, Flynn, Baker, Campbell, Arroyo, O'Malley, and Breadon:

As Executive Director of the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals (COBTH) and a resident of the City of Boston, I am writing to express my support for the City of Boston's proposed FY2021 budget request for the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC).

As you may know, over the last several extraordinary months, the COBTH staff and our member hospitals have worked in very close partnership with the BPHC to respond to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and more recently, to prepare our hospitals for the important demonstrations that continue to take place in neighborhoods throughout our City in response to the devastating murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black and Brown residents of our city, state and country. The collaboration between COBTH and the BPHC has included participation in daily telephone calls run by the BPHC for both acute hospital situational awareness; readiness to respond to health care needs resulting from public health emergencies and large public events taking place within our City; and daily troubleshooting across all facets of the health care delivery system response to COVID-19 and to the demonstrations and events unfolding in our City.

In addition, the BPHC has participated in regular meetings of the COBTH hospitals in the areas of emergency management and preparedness, the delivery of emergency medical services, and the provision of critical care to patients at our academic medical centers, as well as the post-acute care needs of our patients. Our hospitals have partnered with BPHC both collectively and individually in standing up resources to provide needed respite, isolation, and care to unsheltered populations; to bring COVID-19 testing to communities throughout the City of Boston, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations and neighborhoods; and to respond to a wide range of prevention, care delivery, and public health challenges in neighborhoods throughout the City.



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The BPHC has set an ambitious agenda for FY2021, including the eight key strategies recently articulated in Mayor Walsh's declaration of racism as a public health crisis in our City delineated below, including:

- 1. Develop policy and practice solutions that work to dismantle the systemic racism that creates barriers to strong public health. Strategies include using a health equity in all policies approach to evaluate current policies and practices and ensure access to data to drive equitable policy and practice development.*
- 2. In partnership with COVID-19 Health Inequities Task Force, develop a 'Boston Health Equity Now' plan that outlines detailed objectives and measurable goals in which the City will focus on root causes of the inequities that cause disparities in health outcomes for our residents.*
- 3. Engage historically marginalized communities in identifying problems and solutions and supporting community-driven responses.*
- 4. Ensure complete and regular availability of specific race and ethnicity data that documents the health inequities that exist in Boston through collection, dissemination, and remedies for gaps in that data to strengthen our collective understanding. This should include implementing and, if necessary, revising the Boston Health Equity Measure Set, and data sharing between BPHC and relevant agencies of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*
- 5. Conduct ongoing and enhanced analysis using all available data to understand the complexity of the interconnectedness of societal, environmental and behavioral factors that contribute to the impact of racism on access to those resources that promote good health including good jobs, access to healthy and affordable food and housing, equitable transportation options and excellent public education. This includes a more comprehensive understanding of racism and its impact on violence in the community both as a direct correlation to its existence and the impact that it creates on the overall health of people and the community at large.*
- 6. Focus on access to prevention and treatment that is culturally and linguistically competent and meets communities where they are to counter the inequities that exist in health care.*
- 7. Develop direct service programs and services to address the negative impact that these inequities have had on specific populations as well as programs that empower communities to tackle these systemic barriers.*
- 8. Advocate at the state and federal level for policies and funding opportunities that directly combat systemic racism.*

In addition, the BPHC's budget includes plans to increase expenditures in the areas of violence prevention, trauma teams and other counseling services, needed EMS lifesaving equipment, enhanced data and information acquisition efforts, and improved recovery services.



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I have been enormously grateful for our partnership with BPHC, for their constant and tireless leadership throughout the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, and for the continued leadership and engagement of the Boston City Council and Mayor Walsh, and the vigilance you have demonstrated in actively responding to the most pressing public health challenges of our time.

I recognize the important decisions the Council must make in the coming days to finalize the FY21 budget consistent with our values as a City, and truly hope that a strong BPHC budget -- that aligns with the goals and values of our communities -- can be part of our shared efforts to make meaningful progress toward breaking down the structures of systemic racism in our City.

I look forward to working in continued partnership and collaboration with you and respectfully request your support for the proposed BPHC budget for FY2021.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me at pmcmullin@cobth.org or 617-308-7406 if I may provide additional information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Patricia McMullin'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P'.

Patricia McMullin
Executive Director
Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals