Dear Editor,

There is a little-known bill before the Massachusetts Legislature that has serious potential adverse consequences for the public: S.1334/H.2204 (see: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H2204>). Referred to as the “Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community Act” (or “SAPHE 2.0”), S.1334/H.2204 will dramatically reshape the public health infrastructure in the state at potentially great financial cost to taxpayers and with little or no local involvement.

The bill as written poses several major problems:

1. **It would give ill-defined and unprecedented powers** to the Commissioners of Public Health and of Environmental Protection to organize sweeping public health responses. Terms in the bill such as “outbreak of disease” and “public health situation” are used vaguely, along with what “public health responses” might be proposed and the criteria for implementation—giving dangerously broad powers that would affect every MA resident to two unelected government officials.
2. **It disempowers local boards of health** to manage their own local situations, compelling them to concede to decision-makers removed from local issues and the needs of their own communities.
3. **It allows for increased surveillance** and tracking of individuals, eroding medical/personal privacy.
4. **It accelerates an expensive state bureaucracy**—using millions in federal funds from the “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021,” which are temporary; MA taxpayers may be burdened with the costs of maintaining these systems once the new infrastructure is in place.

It is now known that many covid pandemic mandates and restrictions—despite bold and inaccurate promises made at the time—were ill-advised and harmful to individuals and the community. Lost jobs, bankrupted businesses, physical injury, psychological distress, isolation of dying family members, neglect of routine health maintenance care, and delays in children’s development are among the harmful effects. Caution, discernment and localized responses are needed going forward, not increased powers for unelected officials to potentially enact widescale mandates that bypass individual and community decision-making.

Sincerely,