



# Town of Sudbury

## Board of Health

DPW Office Building  
275 Old Lancaster Road  
Sudbury, MA 01776  
978 440-5479

### Health Department ARPA Funding Proposal

Since early 2020, the Health Department's primary focus has been tasks related to COVID-19. Demands on the department due to the pandemic resulted in employees working increased hours, including evenings and weekends to provide contact tracing, public education, COVID policy updates and enforcement, vaccination clinics, and consultation to the community. This impacts the bandwidth available for many of the department's other administrative tasks through which the community is serviced. Another goal of this proposal is to allow additional capacity for the department to provide the proactive and preventative public health work needed to protect the community's overall health and wellbeing, including improving racial and social equity.

#### 1. IMMEDIATE NEED: At-Home COVID Testing Kits

*(ARPA Category: A1; Sudbury Focus Area: 1, 3)*

##### Recommended Action:

- Purchase at-home COVID test kits for residents who cannot afford or access testing.

*Requested amount: \$50,000*

##### Justification for Above Sections:

- According to a recent study "Public health screening is potentially the most powerful for of COVID-19 testing, aimed at outbreak suppression through maximizing detection of infected individuals." COVID-19 infection presents asymptotically in 20 to 40% of cases. Additionally, in cases that do present with symptoms, there is a pre-symptomatic period where infected individuals do not yet show symptoms but are capable of transmitting the virus to others. These asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases of COVID-19 contribute significantly to the spread of the virus.<sup>1</sup>
- A study in Italy showed a correlation between widespread testing and a significant decrease in COVID-19 mortality. These findings suggest that enacting policy for broader availability of testing is effective in containing COVID-19 outbreaks.<sup>2</sup>
- A further study finds that COVID-19 rapid tests are "promising tools for scaling up testing and ensuring that patient management and public health measures can be implemented without delay."<sup>3</sup>
- While Massachusetts is delivering 2.1 million free over the counter (OTC) rapid antigen test kits to over 100 municipalities, Sudbury is not among them. The state has chosen these municipalities due to their having "larger proportion[s] of families facing financial hardship." As a generally wealthy town, this leaves Sudbury's low-income residents at a disadvantage.<sup>4</sup>

- The cost of at-home COVID-19 rapid tests increased significantly in January. Retailers such as Walmart, Kroger, and Amazon committed to selling these tests at-cost for three months in a deal with the Biden administration, but as of Tuesday, January 4, 2022, that program has ended.
- No-cost COVID PCR tests are again in high demand and difficult to find. As of January 6, 2022, there are zero no-cost COVID testing sites in Sudbury. The closest location is Walgreens in Framingham, for which appointments are required and there is no testing available either before or after work hours (before 9 AM or after 5 PM). These factors significantly affect low-income Sudbury residents' abilities to take a COVID test at no cost, particularly those without transportation.
- The front-line workers are among those who are most likely to be exposed to COVID-19, as well as those least likely to be able to get to a testing facility during business hours in order to be tested.
- Those same front-line workers are, in many cases, low-income hourly wage workers as well. Data shows that front-line workers are also more likely to be Black or Hispanic, which exacerbates an issue of inequity.<sup>5</sup>
- The Health Department is getting calls daily about the need for tests from Sudbury residents.

## 2. Temporary Contracted Support to Update Health Department Files

*(ARPA Category: A1; Sudbury Focus Area: 2,4)*

### Recommended Action:

- Contract a time/task-limited position to upgrade antiquated, obsolete and outdated BOH regulations.  
*Requested amount: \$200,000*
- Contract a time/task-limited position to codify BOH regulations into an online format.  
*Requested amount: \$20,000*
- Contract a time/task-limited position to digitize Health Department files.  
*Requested amount: \$100,000*

## 3. Expand Public Health Services

*(ARPA Category: A1; Sudbury Focus Area: 1,2,3,4)*

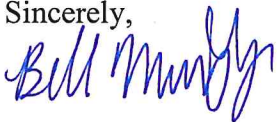
### Recommended Action:

- Hire a full-time public health nurse to serve as Board of Health liaison to the schools and senior center  
*Requested amount: \$85,000/year + fixed costs; \$400,000 total*
- Continue to fund position for Medical Reserve Corp Volunteer Coordinator to engage in recruitment, onboarding, training and deployment.  
*Requested amount: \$40,000/year; \$160,000 total*

Justification for Above Sections:

- The Health Department continues to be significantly impacted by the demands of the pandemic, and it is impacting the Department's ability to complete large scale tasks. The end of December saw record breaking numbers of COVID cases daily in Massachusetts, illustrating the continued demands on public health two years into this pandemic.<sup>6</sup>
- The 2021 Sudbury Master Plan lists the following objective: "Increase staffing to support public health work and utilize volunteers in the community to assist with educating and serving residents."
- The Master Plan also notes that the Health Department is responsible for addressing "health needs in town, including environmental health issues such as housing code violations, mosquito control, hazardous waste, animal/rabies control, groundwater supplies, and emergency preparedness," all critical areas that were given decreased attention due to the immediate and pressing needs of the pandemic.
- Additionally, the Health Department does not have the bandwidth to adequately address public health needs related to racism, equity, mental health, non-COVID related education, or overall prevention. (Please see [Board of Health Social Work Office ARPA Funds Proposal for additional data regarding community needs.](#))
- A robust, engaged, credentialed, and trained Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteer pool is critical. Without MRC volunteers, the BOH could not provide vaccination clinics, emergency shelters, hazardous waste collection, tick/mosquito-borne illness educational materials at hiking trail heads, or health fairs/wellness events. MRC members are also being recruited to help deliver food from the food pantry to those without access, and there are a myriad of other supports that they could provide with this resource in place.
- The duration and intensity of demands during the pandemic have put unrealistic expectations on the staff of the Health Department over the past two years. The World Health Organization identifies working long hours as a risk factor for disease and illness and notes, "Working 55 hours or more per week is a serious health hazard...It's time that we all, governments, employers, and employees wake up to the fact that long working hours can lead to premature death". This risk is increased for employees over the age of 45.<sup>7</sup> Employees continue to be committed to the health and wellbeing of the community, and request that their health and wellbeing is prioritized as well.

Sincerely,



Bill Murphy, MS, RS, CHO  
Director of Public Health

- <sup>1</sup> Mina, M. J. & Andersen, K. G. (2020). Covid-19 testing: One size does not fit all. *Science*. 371(6525). 126-127.
- <sup>2</sup> Di Bari, M., Balzi, D., Carreras, G., & Onder, G. (2020). Extensive Testing May Reduce COVID-19 Mortality: A Lesson From Northern Italy. *Frontiers in Medicine*, 7. 1-5.
- <sup>3</sup> Peeling, R. W., Ollario, P.L., Boeras, D. I., & Fongwen, N. (2021). Scaling up COVID-19 rapid antigen tests: promises and challenges. *Lancet Infect Dis*. 21. e290-e295.
- <sup>4</sup> *Covid-19 self-test distribution*. Mass.gov. (n.d.). Retrieved January 6, 2022, from <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-self-test-distribution>
- <sup>5</sup> Lily Casura, R. L. (2021, March 12). *Frontline workers in the U.S.: Race, ethnicity, and gender*. N-IUSSP. Retrieved January 6, 2022, from <https://www.niussp.org/education-work-economy/frontline-workers-in-the-u-s-race-ethnicity/>
- <sup>6</sup> Mass.gov. (2021, December 28). *COVID-19 response reporting*. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting#covid-19-interactive-data-dashboard->
- <sup>7</sup> World Health Organization. (2021, May 17). *Long working hours increasing deaths from heart disease and stroke: WHO, ILO*. <https://www.who.int/news/item/17-05-2021-long-working-hours-increasing-deaths-from-heart-disease-and-stroke-who-ilo>