

July 1, 2009

John Auerbach, Commissioner
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Commissioner Auerbach:

Massachusetts, along with many other states in this nation, has been confronted with a new type of flu virus, now known as the H1N1 flu virus, or Swine Flu since the first cases were confirmed in mid-April. As of June 23, 2009, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is reporting 1,287 cases of the H1N1 virus among Massachusetts residents with 134 hospitalizations and two deaths. The largest concentration of cases have been in Boston with 474 confirmed cases and 70 hospitalizations, however cases have been reported in all of the Commonwealth's counties.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 30,000 confirmed cases have been reported in 74 countries. Leading experts have predicted that further spread is considered inevitable and that the spread will occur in a potentially more severe strain, causing more serious and life-threatening illness. Currently, there is no vaccine against the H1N1 flu virus. On June 11th, WHO raised the level of influenza pandemic alert from Phase 5 to Phase 6.

Early last month, the United States Secretary of Health & Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan wrote to K-12 educators across the country commending them for a job well done in dealing with the challenges of managing the virus in schools, and urging them to, among other things, update their all-hazards emergency plans and ensure that parents develop contingency plans for their families. Secretaries Sebelius and Duncan are encouraging schools and families to use the summer months to develop and share a coordinated public health strategy that aims to protect our children and families and minimize disruptions during times of crisis.

I would like to congratulate DPH, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Department of Early Education and Care, as well as any other cooperating agencies for a commendable job in managing this public health threat to date. Massachusetts has been on the front lines since the H1N1 flu virus was identified in the United States, reporting some of the first cases in the country. As we continue to face this very uncertain

situation, my legislative colleagues and I would greatly appreciate a thorough update on the plans that are being put into place to ensure that Massachusetts remains at the front lines of addressing this pandemic. Of greatest concern is the safety of our young people. We know that the H1N1 virus has preferentially infected younger people, although our elderly and immunocompromised populations are also at higher risk for infection.

Given the high likelihood of the H1N1 virus' reoccurrence in the fall, what plans are being put into place to ensure these populations remain safe, particularly if a more severe strain of the virus resurfaces? In addition, my understanding is that some flu vaccine manufacturers have been diligently working on an H1N1 flu virus vaccination and hope to have it available by the fall. Is this true and if so, how will this vaccination be distributed along with the seasonal flu vaccination given that there are approximately one million school children in Massachusetts? What type of coordination exists among DPH, DESE, DEEC, and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency with regard to the predicted reoccurrence of this virus?

Thank you for all that you do to protect the health of young people in Massachusetts. I look forward to your prompt response so that we can continue to ensure that Massachusetts remains prepared to confront this flu pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard T. Moore". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

RICHARD T. MOORE

Senate Chairman, Committee on Health Care Financing