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WOMEN LEGISLATORS FILE COVID-19 VACCINE EQUITY LEGISLATION

Legislation requires Baker Administration to take aggressive, multi-pronged action to close race, income-based, regional disparities in COVID-19 vaccination

Boston, MA - Senator Becca Rausch (D-Needham), Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz (D-Boston), Representative Liz Miranda (D-Boston), and Representative Mindy Domb (D-Amherst) today filed [legislation](#) to improve Massachusetts' COVID-19 vaccination rollout response and increase vaccine delivery in communities disproportionately affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The bill reflects collaboration among the filers, Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton), and multiple public health and infectious disease experts.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's weekly state report last Thursday, Black people account for 2.6% of those who have received at least one vaccine dose in Massachusetts, while Latinx residents accounted for 3.3%. Since March, communities with the highest concentrations of populations of color, people living in overcrowded housing, low income households, and frontline workers have been disproportionately represented in Massachusetts' COVID-19 case count. Furthermore, after adjusting for age, Black, Hispanic and Asian residents also experienced much [higher COVID death rates](#) throughout the pandemic.

"The loss of trust between Black and Latinx communities and the government and medical establishment didn't happen by accident, and neither will equity," said **Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz (D-Boston)**. "Achieving vaccine parity requires us to invest in sustained, multi-faceted outreach towards the hardest-hit communities, create more accessible vaccination and testing sites, and increase transparency and oversight regarding the status of the rollout. That's exactly what this bill provides."

"Even those who are eligible for a COVID vaccine cannot get an appointment unless they have internet and car access, ample time to spare, literacy in specific languages, and technological proficiency," said **Senator Becca Rausch (D-Needham)**. "This bill significantly strengthens immunization implementation and infrastructure statewide by advancing racial, economic, and regional equity in vaccination access and outreach. We cannot get to the other side of COVID-19 or its many repercussions without addressing systemic injustice in health care delivery and strengthening local community health in every corner of our Commonwealth."

The legislation requires the Baker administration to take a number of actions to further expand access to vaccination and testing in communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19, including:

1. appointing a director of COVID-19 vaccination equity and outreach whose sole focus is addressing disparities in vaccination rates rooted in racism, mistrust of government, and disparate access to information and resources;
2. partnering with trusted local organizations, including local boards of health, for direct outreach campaigns, including through phone calls, text messages, door to

- door canvassing, and interactive digital events, to deliver information and support relative to the COVID-19 vaccine in the hardest-hit communities;
3. creating a vaccination vehicle program for mobile vaccination in communities with the highest rates of COVID-19 test positivity;
 4. appointing an expert on vaccine disinformation to the Vaccine Advisory Group;
 5. expanding Stop the Spread testing sites to all gateway cities; and
 6. requiring the Executive Branch to make detailed vaccination implementation and equity plans publicly available, as well as provide weekly updates on the status of the rollout.

“There is no just and equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic without prioritizing the communities who remain most vulnerable due to historic pre-existing inequities that exist across our safety net,” said **Representative Liz Miranda (D-Boston)**. “This critical legislation aims to bridge the gap between our traditional systems of care and grassroots partners on the ground.”

“I’m proud to join my colleagues to advance our commitment to health equity in the Commonwealth,” said **Representative Mindy Domb (D-Amherst)**. “With the state’s vaccine roll-out underway, we need to ensure that the distribution is fair and that state resources are dedicated to achieve vaccine equity across Massachusetts. By highlighting data collection and reporting, this bill also helps us shift resources in real time if needed, as well as better understand how our good intentions may either be falling short or succeeding.”

Massachusetts ranks in the bottom half of the nation in per-capita vaccinations, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and currently lacks a comprehensive plan to deliver vaccines to its communities hardest hit by COVID-19.

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