

January 22, 2021

Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz
Senator Julian Cyr
Representative Carlos González
Representative José F. Tosado
Representative Chynah Tyler
Representative Donald H. Wong

RE: Legislation adopting recommendations of Health Equity Task Force for the collection and reporting of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data in the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Senators and Representatives,

We are grateful that the Massachusetts legislature's Health Equity Task Force adopted language calling for the collection and reporting of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data in the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ As we stated in our testimony to the Task Force in September 2020, there are many reasons to believe that LGBTQ people may be disproportionately vulnerable to infection by the novel coronavirus and to complications should they develop COVID-19. This is especially true of Black, Latinx and Indigenous LGBTQ people and LGBTQ older adults.

¹ **FY21 State Budget Recommendation: COVID-19 and Health Equity Enhanced Data and Reporting Section**

"Section 1 of chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020 is hereby amended in subsection (c) by inserting after "(ix)" the following:-

"(x) industry; (xi) sexual orientation and gender identity; (xii) cluster information by category and location and (xiii)."

and said section 1 is further amended in subsection (f) by inserting after the word "section" the following:-
"on a bi-weekly basis"

and said section 1 is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:-

""(h) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of public health shall, on not less than a weekly basis, collect and compile data including from the use of the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) from all boards of health, as defined in section 1 of chapter 111 of the General Laws, and from any person, corporation, association, partnership or other legal entity over which the department has regulatory authority, that is related to the distribution of vaccines for COVID-19, and vaccination rates in the commonwealth. Said data shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following: (1) the total number of people who have received the COVID-19 vaccine within the previous week period and the vaccination rate, stratified by populations prioritized for the vaccine and the specific version of the vaccine given; (2) the aggregate rate and number of people who have been vaccinated since inception of the availability of the vaccine; (3) demographic information for all individuals who have received a COVID-19 vaccine stratified by the version of vaccine, including, but not limited to: (i) gender; (ii) race; (iii) ethnicity; (iv) primary city or town of residence; (v) age; (vi) disability; (vii) primary language; (viii) occupation; (ix) industry; (xi) sexual orientation and gender identity; (xi) information on residence in elder care facilities and other congregate settings, including individuals who are homeless and (xii) any other demographic information that the department deems important to understand the vaccination rates in certain populations."

Health Equity Task Force. *Established by Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020*. Discussion Draft Interim Report. October 7, 2020. Page 44. Available at <https://malegislature.gov/Commissions/Detail/512/Documents>. Click on "Health Equity Task Force Draft Interim Summary Report for Input, 10/7/20."

Because of high rates of medical mistrust, these populations, as well as transgender people and lesbian and bisexual women, may also be more reluctant to access the COVID-19 vaccine. For all these reasons, collecting and reporting SOGI data in coronavirus testing, care and vaccination is critical to ensuring health equity for all Massachusetts residents.

We write to ask you to file legislation requiring the collection and reporting, on a biweekly basis, of SOGI data in the COVID-19 pandemic, including testing, care, and vaccination. This would implement the recommendation of the Health Equity Task Force made in its October 7, 2020 interim report on page 44.² We would welcome an opportunity help your offices draft this legislation or assist in any way you would find useful in moving this legislation forward.

Please consider us a resource and do not hesitate to reach out.
Thank you.

Carl Sciortino
Executive Vice President of External Relations
csciortino@fenwayhealth.org
857-313-6572

Sean Cahill, PhD
Director, Health Policy Research
scahill@fenwayhealth.org
646-761-6639

Carrie Richgels
Manager of Policy and Advocacy
crichgels@fenwayhealth.org
857-313-6595

²Health Equity Task Force. *Established by Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020*. Discussion Draft Interim Report. October 7, 2020. Page 44. Available at <https://malegislature.gov/Commissions/Detail/512/Documents>. Click on “Health Equity Task Force Draft Interim Summary Report for Input, 10/7/20.”