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February 28, 2020

His Excellency Charles D. Baker
The State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

On behalf of the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals (COBTH), thank you and your esteemed colleagues for the opportunity to offer comments on the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) Draft Memorandum of Understanding. We are deeply grateful for your continued leadership on reducing carbon emissions, and your determination to collaborate regionally on strategies to reduce the devastating impact of carbon emissions on public health.

By way of background, COBTH is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the extraordinary teaching, research, and clinical care missions of Greater Boston's teaching hospitals. COBTH institutions provide patient care to all residents, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay; train the next generation of physicians, nurses and allied health professionals; research new, life-saving treatments and cures; and make robust investments in our surrounding neighborhoods and communities.

Climate Change is a Significant Threat to Public Health

As institutions of research and learning, as major employers, and as frontline providers of health care to the most vulnerable residents of our Commonwealth, we are deeply concerned about the worsening impact of carbon emissions and climate change on public health. We are particularly concerned about declining health status in low-income, underserved neighborhoods and communities who are disproportionately impacted by the ongoing threat of climate change.

As you know, transportation emissions significantly decrease air quality; increase the frequency of extreme heat days and incidences of vector-borne diseases; and cause periods of heavy rainfall, drought, and other extreme weather events – all of which have associated health impacts. In these communities, there is substantially more exposure to air pollution, as well as “heat islands,” where the presence of concrete and asphalt raises temperatures even higher.

The health impacts of climate change are increasingly all too real to our frontline providers and have a direct and adverse impact on the health of our patients and neighboring communities. In our teaching hospitals, we see firsthand the damage that increased carbon dioxide in our atmosphere has caused for our patients in increased incidence of asthma, cardiovascular problems, Lyme disease, and more.



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The regional collaboration made possible by TCI provides an historic and meaningful opportunity to substantially reduce carbon emissions and significantly improve public health. We are enormously encouraged that preliminary assessments of public health benefits of TCI estimates the program could achieve anywhere from \$3-10 billion in public health benefits. This would mean not only cost savings to our health care system, but improved health outcomes for our patients.

Local, statewide, regional, and national strategies are essential to preventing the widescale, irreversible, and unsustainable negative health impacts of climate change. It is particularly important to our hospitals that the goal of achieving health equity guide your deliberations, and that needed investments resulting from these efforts are dedicated to responding equitably to the needs of communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Thank you again for your continued leadership and efforts, and we look forward to working with you in the coming months and beyond.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Patricia B. McMullin'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Patricia B. McMullin, JD
Executive Director

CC: Governor Ned Lamont, Governor John Carney, Governor Janet Mills, Governor Larry Hogan, Governor Chris Sununu, Governor Phil Murphy, Governor Andrew Cuomo, Governor Tom Wolf, Governor Gina Raimondo, Governor Phil Scott, Governor Ralph Northam, Mayor Muriel Bowser