



**Town of Provincetown
260 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657**

**Board of Health
Telephone (508) 487-7020
Fax (508) 487-7040**

July 30, 2020

Secretary Marylou Sudders
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
1 Ashburton Place
11th Floor
Boston, MA. 02108

Dear Secretary Sudders,

We want to thank you for all the work you are doing to fight the COVID-19 pandemic as head of Governor Baker's COVID Command Center. We are in the midst of extremely challenging times and we appreciate all the state has done to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 throughout the Commonwealth. The process of re-opening Massachusetts has been thoughtfully implemented as it works to protect the health and safety of all its residents.

We value the transparency on COVID-19 statistics, especially the information on hospitalization rates, which gives insight into how intensely the virus can spread. We are particularly happy to see "Stop the Spread," a free strategic testing initiative that targets asymptomatic individuals for testing in communities with a higher number of COVID-19 positive residents, double in size. This initiative is a great example of the Baker Administration's mission to expand the capacity and distribution of testing.

The issue of testing is of great importance to our community. As one health expert noted, "testing is the tool we use to make our enemy visible during this pandemic." We are greatly concerned about the slow processing times at national labs for PCR COVID-19 test results. In Provincetown, our summer season brings a massive increase in our population. As a tourist destination, even this summer, we have had numerous day trippers and visitors arrive to town. With many businesses turning to remote working opportunities, many of our second homeowners are living here as well, increasing our population. This activity brings with it a heightened health concern for many who work in hospitality and retail industries.

The town recently joined with the business community and Outer Cape Health Services to proactively test asymptomatic hospitality and retail workers. The initiative was well received, but with a 7-day delay for results, it could make it harder for our community to contain the spread of the disease, as anyone who tested positive could potentially expose others to COVID-19 while waiting for results. As a rural community that is doing its part, we deserve a shorter turnaround for our proactive testing initiatives.

We ask that the Baker Administration develop standards for testing turnaround time of not more than 48 hours. With each positive result comes contact tracing, and delaying contact tracing increases the potential for additional exposures. Delayed results also postpone the ability for a case's workplace to deep clean after an exposure in a timely manner.

Currently, Quest Diagnostics is the lab analyzing all the tests administered in Provincetown. We realize the company is working overtime to deliver results and is overwhelmed by the surging COVID-19 cases in Western and Southern states. Our request is that if Quest is unable to shorten their turnaround time to 48 hours, that the Commonwealth facilitate a means for Community Health Centers in rural communities such as ours to work with Massachusetts-based labs to get faster results. Currently issues such as integrating records systems and establishing new courier methods stand in the way. It is imperative that the state help rural communities expand their capacity for testing when their community health center does not have its own laboratory.

By providing a network of labs to use and a barrier-free means for accessing those labs, coupled with a standard of a 48-hour turnaround time for COVID-19 testing results, we feel that we will be able to proactively protect our community by containing the spread of COVID-19 when it strikes.

Very Truly Yours,

Steve Katsurinis
Chair, Board of Health

Dr. Susan Troyan
Vice Chair, Board of Health

Morgan Clark
Health Director

Kalliope Chute
Member, Board of Health

Dr. Elise Cozzi
Member, Board of Health

Dr. Janet Whelan
Member, Board of Health

Irv Morgan
Member, Board of Health

Christopher Hartley
Member, Board of Health