



**TOWN OF MILTON
BOARD OF HEALTH
525 Canton Avenue
Milton, MA 02186**



Board of Health

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Date: January 15, 2025

To: Public Health Council
Edward Bernstein MD, BU
250 Washington Street
2nd Floor, Henry I. Bowditch Public Health Council Room
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Immediate Healthcare Capacity Audit of South Shore/Norfolk County

Dear community partners,

The undersigned request an **immediate** Healthcare Capacity Audit of the South Shore/Norfolk County region to protect the health and welfare of its residents and the remaining hospitals, South Shore Hospital and Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton, that serve the area.

On November 1, 2020, the last vestiges of Quincy City Hospital closed, making Quincy the only city in Massachusetts without a hospital. Norwood Hospital closed June 28, 2020. Carney Hospital closed August 30, 2024. On May 30, 2023, Compass Medical, a chain of urgent care and medical clinics shut down its physician group practice locations suddenly. These closures have presented significant operational concerns for remaining facilities and a massive loss of hospital resources for residents. Research indicates that greater distance from hospitals affects mortality. Traffic on 93N is classified as the fourth most congested traffic corridor in the United States making an emergency ambulance trip from the South Shore to Boston dangerous.

South Shore Hospital and Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton combined are out of physical space. “We physically have no more space,” said South Shore Health’s Chief Medical Officer Jason Tracy, M.D. “We’re running 550 inpatients in a 374-bed hospital.” July 1, 2024 The Front Line Capacity Crisis: Local hospitals have no more space <https://www.mhalink.org/mondayreport/the-frontline-of-the-capacity-crisis/>. Additionally, recent CHIA¹ data shows poor reimbursement data for the South Shore Hospitals. There are also staffing and ambulance issues. All these vectors present serious risks for residents.

Largely in response to the Steward Healthcare disaster, on May 16, 2024, the House passed Bill H. 4643. The Bill establishes a Health Resource Planning Council to produce a five-year plan regarding how to address regional and state capacity issues, which will be housed within a reformed Health Policy Commission (HPC). The Bill commits to comprehensive state and regional health resource planning and requires consideration of the state plan in the Determination of Need (DoN) process.

<https://malegislature.gov/PressRoom/Detail?pressReleaseId=84>

¹ CHIA is an independent state agency that provides objective analysis of the quality, affordability, utilization, and access to the Mass. health care system.



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The South Shore has been losing massive healthcare capacity which will be further exacerbated by increased population due to the MBTA Communities Act, Accessory Dwelling Units, (as of right) and other housing policy initiatives. The basic math of drastically reduced hospital capacity, staffing and ambulance problems, and the population growth in the area is a recipe for a disaster. The Governor declared a shelter State of Emergency on August 8, 2023, as a result of a rapid population influx. That Emergency status remains in place over a year later, indicating the crisis remains unresolved.

Regulatory authorities failed to plan for the collapse of the various Steward healthcare entities and have remained silent about plans to create a healthcare capacity safety net on the South Shore.

We request you respond to this letter with urgency that the situation requires:

- Hold a community forum to announce a plan and take questions from residents and providers.
- Call for a study that shows a plan for increased populations now, and for the next 5, 10, and 20 years to determine how increased populations in these areas will affect the delivery of healthcare and provide adequate hospital capacity to all residents.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,


Laura Richards
Milton Public Health-Chair


Caroline A. Kinsella
Milton Health Department Director