



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619**

MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
Lieutenant Governor

KATHLEEN E. WALSH
Secretary

ROBERT GOLDSTEIN, MD, PhD
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000
www.mass.gov/dph

April 2, 2025

Laura Richards, Esq. Chairperson
Caroline Kinsella, BSN, RN, RS, Health Director
Milton Health Department
525 Canton Avenue, First floor
Milton, MA 02186

Dear Ms. Kinsella and Ms. Richards,

Thank you for your letter highlighting the capacity concerns at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton (BIM) and South Shore Hospital in response to recent hospital closures combined with closures in the past, including Quincy Hospital and Compass Medical. I recognize that these closures coupled with population growth in Milton and the surrounding communities are of critical concern. Your input about these specific challenges is essential for the Department of Public Health (DPH) to maintain quality and accessible health care for residents throughout the Commonwealth. We appreciate your feedback and recognize the concerns, questions, frustrations, and sadness that the closure of these facilities is having on your community. I appreciate your advocacy and continued commitment to the health of all Milton residents.

As you note, the hospitals nearest to Milton, including Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton and South Shore Hospital, had been experiencing significant capacity strains. DPH has engaged with both hospitals to identify strategies to expand capacity and improve patient throughput. In addition, DPH has been working diligently with the Dorchester Region working group following the closure of Carney Hospital to identify gaps in emergency services, urgent care, and behavioral health in the community and provide recommendations.

In addition to the above efforts to address capacity challenges at the hospitals and across eastern Massachusetts, it is important to highlight the work of a multidisciplinary, collaborative group formed in January 2024 focused on the area. This group, which includes Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton and South Shore Hospital, has been working on pilot interventions that may improve capacity and hospital throughput. Some specific interventions that are likely to benefit include:

- Focused education efforts to expand 911 to Behavioral Health Help Line transfers
- Discussion of direct transport by EMS to Community Behavioral Health Centers
- Promotion of health care proxy form completion and enhanced education
- Updated MassHealth forms to improve accessibility and expedite completion

- Simplification of MassHealth enrollment process to remove barriers to long-term care eligibility determinations

As with most interventions focused on emergency department volume and inpatient capacity, it is likely that the impact of these pilots will take time to generate meaningful shifts in patient volume. Our hope is that these efforts will be synergistic and can result in a substantial change in inpatient capacity across the region.

Since your letter from January 15, 2025, the number of people being treated for respiratory illness has decreased dramatically and there have been significant improvements in hospital staffing and occupancy across Massachusetts, including in the hospitals around Milton. Most notably the combined seven-day average of medical/surgical bed capacity at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton and South Shore Hospital dropped to 83.9% (reporting week 3/16/25-3/22/25). Within the same period, statewide medical/surgical bed capacity was 89.5%.

While there are not currently plans for a community forum or population-based study, Sam Wong, the Director of the Office of Local and Regional Health at DPH and I remain available to connect with you to discuss any additional concerns. I want to thank you and your team for your ongoing collaboration and commitment to addressing the public health impact of elevated emergency department and inpatient capacity to the Town of Milton.

Sincerely,


Robbie Goldstein, MD, PhD
Commissioner, Department of Public Health

CC: Secretary Kate Walsh
Andrea Joy Campbell
Sam Wong