



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



**Public Health**  
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**Board of Health**

Laura T. Richards, Esq., Chair  
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Roxanne Musto, RN-C, MS, ANP, Member

Caroline A. Kinsella, BSN, RN, RS  
Health Director

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Date: January 15, 2025

To: Massachusetts Department of Public Health Commissioner Robbie Goldstein M.D.  
250 Washington Street (The Devonshire)  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 643-0596

**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 CHIA<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>1</sup> 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 T. Richards  
Milton Public Health-Chair

Caroline A. Kinsella

Milton Health Department Director



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

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Secretary

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Commissioner

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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