April 10, 2020

Governor Charles Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St.
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Chelsea’s Immediate and Disproportionate COVID Crisis Impacts

Dear Governor Baker:

As you are aware, the City of Chelsea is experiencing an alarming rate of COVID-19 infections within our 1.8 square miles. As of last night, our per capita rate of infection is over 106 per 10,000 residents with Lawrence coming in second with 75 cases per capita. Our rates are not only significantly higher than other communities, as far as we can tell, but there is a significant gap between what we are experiencing in our community and the next highest community.

Chelsea’s per capita rate is higher than some of the hardest hit boroughs of New York City, the epicenter of the virus in the United States.

As community leaders, public health professionals, researchers, organizers and elected officials, we understand that these rates are not a perfect reflection of reality. However, we also understand that Chelsea is in desperate need of state assistance.

According to data from Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), 40% of MGH’s positive COVID-19 infections are non-English speakers, with more than half of those being of Latino descent. As a working class community, the majority of whom are Latinx, many of our residents are considered essential workers during this crisis. Whether they are in hospitality industries, supermarket/grocery store, transportation, maintenance workers, etc. these residents are carrying out essential services during this pandemic, and compromising their own health and that of their families and our community.
Chelsea has banded together to provide immediate response to the dire need in Chelsea. We have all hands on deck, and it is still not sufficient to meet demand. Many of the issues that made Chelsea a vulnerable community pre-pandemic have been exacerbated (e.g., high rates of children relying on subsidized meals at school and living in poverty; high rates of tenant occupied housing; language barriers; pre-existing health conditions that are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 including cardiovascular disease, asthma, hypertension; extreme population density; English language isolation, and low rates of health care utilization). We need your support and your quick action before the situation in Chelsea deteriorates further.

Specifically, we request the following:

- Funding for emergency food, medical, and cleaning supplies
- Funding for emergency housing of displaced residents due to positive COVID-19 tests
- Multilingual communication support to alert residents of the severity of this crisis
- Manpower / resources to coordinate with the City’s existing efforts to effectively operationalize the aforementioned services and resources.

We implore you to take immediate action. Our cases are growing at a phenomenal rate and we have not yet reached the ‘peak’. To discuss this further, please contact Councilor Damali Vidot damali4chelsea@gmail.com and City Manager Tom Ambrosino (617)466-4175.

Very Truly Yours,

Peter Slavin, President
Massachusetts General Hospital

Thomas Ambrosino, City Manager
City of Chelsea

Roseann T. Bongiovanni, Executive Director
GreenRoots

Roy Avellaneda, President
Chelsea City Council

Kevin Tabb, President and CEO
Beth Israel Lahey Health

Damali Vidot, Immediate Past President
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Maria Belen Power, Assc. Executive Director
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Judith Garcia
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Richelle Cromwell, Executive Director
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Cara Cogliano, Executive Director
Community Connections

Kelly Garcia, Chair
Chelsea School Committee

Marisol Santiago
Chelsea School Committee

Ana Hernandez
Chelsea School Committee

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MA State Representative

Enio Lopez
Chelsea City Council

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Melinda Vega Maldonado
Chelsea City Council

Rafael Mares, Executive Director
The Neighborhood Developers

Joan Cromwell
Chelsea Black Community

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Joseph Mahoney, President
Chelsea Chamber of Commerce