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CONTACT:

Derek Silver, Office of Senator Anne Gobi
Derek.Silver@MASenate.gov

**Senate Passes Legislation to Collect Vital Public Health Data, Establish a
COVID-19 Diversity Task Force**

Addresses disparate impact of the COVID-19 on underserved and underrepresented populations

(BOSTON) **Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer)** and The Massachusetts State Senate on Thursday passed bipartisan legislation to promote equity and transparency as the Commonwealth continues to confront the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill, *An Act Addressing COVID-19 Data Collection and Disparities in Treatment*, will increase the amount of statewide, publicly available data as it relates to the coronavirus. The legislation also establishes a task force to study and make policy recommendations to address health disparities for underserved and underrepresented communities during the pandemic. The bill advanced to the governor.

“Overcoming the challenges of gaps in treatment and access to health care has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic,” said **Senator Gobi**. “With bipartisan support we’ve passed a bill that will help close those gaps while informing our future decisions to prevent inequalities from happening in the first place.”

Under the bill, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is required to compile, collect and issue daily online reports on the number of people tested for COVID-19, positive cases, hospitalizations and deaths along with the gender, race, ethnicity, primary residence, occupation, disability, age and primary language of each case.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of cases statewide, the legislation also requires that daily reports include data and demographic information from municipalities and counties with more than 25 positive cases, elder care facilities, as well as state and county correctional facilities. Facility-specific information will be made publicly available while maintaining individual privacy. In addition to requiring greater data collection, the bill requires the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to describe the actions it is taking to address disparities identified through the data collected.

In response to increasing concerns about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and disproportionately impacted populations, the legislation also establishes a task force to study and make policy recommendations for how to address these health disparities. The task force is required to issue an interim report by June 30, 2020, with a final report due August 1, 2020.

The bill, which is the latest action by the Senate to address the COVID-19 public health crisis and its effects on Massachusetts, now advances to the governor's desk.

During the COVID-19 pandemic Senator Gobi and her staff remain available to assist any constituents in need of help. Her chief of staff may be reached at William.Loosemore@MASenate.gov , or you can leave a message at (617) 722-1540 and the office will be in touch.

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