

Copy of Email sent to Secretary Mary-Lou Sudders and others at the MA-COVID-19 Command Center and MA Department of Housing and Community Development from Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz and 11 other Western MA Mayors and Town Managers on October 22, 2020:

RE: URGENT: Western MA Mayors and Managers Request Meeting to Discuss Shelter Needs

Dear Secretary Sudders:

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts' mayors and town managers noted below to request a meeting with you to discuss the emergency shelter, isolation and quarantine needs facing our communities.

Specifically, we are seeking the re-leasing of The Quality Inn in Northampton for combined purposes: isolation/quarantine (I/Q) for the Western MA region and in a separate area, shelter for people who are not COVID-19 positive but are otherwise extremely vulnerable due to living outside.

As you know, right now the only isolation and quarantine hotel available for people who are homeless is located in Everett, MA, a roughly 200 mile trip from the City of Northampton and much farther for those communities farther west than ours. Our public health leaders from the region have expressed grave concern that many people experiencing homelessness are likely to refuse to get tested or to quarantine - in effect refuse shelter - for fear of being relocated so far from their home community if they test positive or have been exposed to COVID-19. Additionally, if someone who is staying at the shelter is exposed to COVID-19, without an accessible I/Q site, the entire shelter may be required to shut down to keep people safe.

These scenarios pose an extreme health risk to these individuals and the communities in which they live and seriously threaten to spread COVID-19 when our shared goal is to contain it.

Also right now, Northampton is at a crossroads for obtaining additional winter shelter capacity. The site used last Spring at the Northampton High School is no longer available due to the possibility of school reopening and there is not a suitable alternative. The Quality Inn has sufficient space to serve as I/Q space and in an entirely separate and safe area, to provide shelter for Northampton's homeless population. We understand FEMA reimbursement is available for all required purposes and we are happy to work with DHCD to ensure that happens.

Finally, it must be noted that in addition to the space needs, every single region across the state is facing a shelter workforce crisis and Western Massachusetts is no exception. Shelter providers are already experiencing staff shortages and are extremely uncertain of how they will meet the staffing demands in the coming months. This challenge can only be met through a two-part statewide plan that addresses sufficient I/Q and hotel sites with state-sponsored staffing where necessary.

We would greatly appreciate an opportunity to talk further and problem-solve with you. We look forward to partnering with you to keep people sheltered and safe with a focus on regional equity which ensures that Western Massachusetts is afforded opportunities and services to meet our unique needs.

Thanks very much for your time and attention. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz

Springfield Mayor Dominic J. Sarno

West Springfield Mayor William Reichelt

Chicopee Mayor John L. Vieau

Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse

Easthampton Mayor Nicole LaChapelle

Amherst Town Manager Paul Bockelman

South Hadley Town Manager Michael Sullivan

Greenfield Mayor Roxann Wedegartner

Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer

North Adams Mayor Tom Bernard

Great Barrington Town Manager Mark Pruhenski