



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

July 12, 2016

Board of Building Regulations and Standards

Re: 9th Edition, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Building Code

Dear members of the Board of Building Regulations and Standards,

I write to you to convey my strong support for the proposal submitted to you by Doug Brugge, PhD., Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine and principal investigator of the Improving the Health of near Highway Communities grant of which the City of Somerville is a sub-grantee, to require high efficiency filtration in housing built near major roadways.

I understand that Professor Brugge's comment letter included an outline of the compelling empirical evidence that shows the connection between exposure to traffic pollution and cardiovascular morbidity and mortality along with other adverse health outcomes. I write to you both as the chief elected official of a city whose residents are exposed to disproportionate levels of harmful traffic pollution, and one of the many Somerville resident whose risk of cardiovascular disease is heightened by a childhood lived in close proximity to the highways that traverse the City in which I grew up and continue to live.

While the health impact of traffic related air pollution may be most elevated in more urban municipalities like Somerville, there are thousands of people in all corners of the state who live in close proximity to highways and face heightened health risks. A large portion of these at-risk Massachusetts residents are also low-income, living in subsidized housing or in units made affordable by virtue of being nearby an undesirable roadway, and thus deal with other challenges that may be exacerbated by health problems associated with traffic pollution exposure. Additionally, much of the underdeveloped land in the Boston Metropolitan area is in close proximity to highways or other major roadways. In order to meet the Commonwealth's acute demand for new housing, at least some new residential developments will be built along these transportation corridors. Without proper air pollution mitigation regulations, the health of Massachusetts residents living near those corridors will be at risk of numerous adverse health impacts.

The proposal made by Professor Brugge to require filtration rated MERV 13 or higher in new and significantly rehabilitated housing units within 500 feet of freeways with greater than 50,000 vehicles per day and within 100 feet of roadways with more than 10,000 vehicles per day is a reasonable and





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effective strategy to mitigate the adverse health outcomes of traffic pollution exposure. Major roadways are crucial for the Commonwealth's continued prosperity and future growth, but the health impact of the traffic air pollution that we know they produce should not be ignored. For all these reasons, I urge the Board to include the proposed regulations in the 9th Edition of the Massachusetts Building Code.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,


Joseph A. Curtatone
Mayor

