

Letter from the Chair: In honor of MLK Day 2022

Dear Friend of GBPSR,

I have a dream, Martin Luther King, Jr. I dream that health professionals and patients across the Commonwealth and the country will find the words to speak up for public health and that we will be heard.



We have been speaking up for many years now. And yet the incalculable loss of life on our planet just in the last year gives one pause.

There is no dashboard for climate as there is for COVID-19 — but if there were, the numbers on that dashboard would be clicking wildly; for at each of the extremes of temperature, hot and cold, human health suffers. We like to think of ourselves as invincible but, in fact, we tolerate a rather narrow temperature range. These data have been clear since Dr. King was still here with us.



We at Greater Boston PSR are concerned about the serious risks to human health posed by the climate crisis, by COVID-19 and by nuclear weapons. At a time when mortuaries are filling up faster than room can be found in cemeteries, it seems odd that we are again sending trillions to a bloated military for nuclear weapons development rather than spend it on health. As Martin Luther King said, we in the US are plagued by a “tragic mixup in priorities. We are spending all this money for death and destruction and not nearly enough for life and constructive development.... When the guns of war

become a national obsession, social needs inevitably suffer.”

Perhaps this will be the year we will change that calculus, when we start prioritizing health — banning nuclear weapons in this country and cleaning up the massive contamination from uranium mining and weapons development that has needlessly exposed so many communities, and especially indigenous communities, communities of color and environmental justice communities, to cancer-causing radioactivity. Maybe things are changing. There are glimmers of hope.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Massachusetts will be hearing testimony next week about the negative health impacts on environmental justice communities that were steamrolled in the rush to put in a polluting gas compressor station in Weymouth.

A biomass incinerator that was to be located in the midst of an environmental justice community was stopped after years of advocacy. Three hundred Boston Latin School students petitioned their City Councilors about the tremendous risks posed by nuclear weapons — and their voices, joining those of many allied groups, were heard: the Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for nuclear abolition and stronger oversight of the nuclear arsenal.

But there are winds of trouble ahead.

Despite the aching public health needs posed by the current pandemic, nuclear weapons and fossil fuel development proceed apace.

What do I hope for in 2022?

Nuclear weapons: To quote MLK, I hope to see our country reallocate funds from the “death and destruction” of nuclear weapons development to “life and constructive development,” starting with addressing the health and environmental harms of radioactive contamination that nuclear development has engendered;

Climate crisis: I hope to see proper enforcement of laws against fossil fuel air pollution, the chief driver of the climate crisis. I hope to see the massive subsidies to the oil and gas industry and monies collected from last year’s misguided approval of thousands of new oil and gas leases allocated instead to public health measures to protect patients around the world from the impacts of climate change.

I hope, in short, that we find the words to say that it is wrong to fail to adequately protect the public’s health.

To find strength in the face of the challenges we confront, let’s remember Martin Luther King Jr.’s words: “But we stand in life at midnight, we are always on the threshold of a new dawn.”

I invite you to join our efforts and lend your skills and interests to our work. If you would like to volunteer your time or would like to join our monthly meetings, please click [here](#).

Yours in the common pursuit,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Lee' or similar, written in a cursive style.



Brita E. Lundberg, M.D.

Chair of the Board

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