

# **Sudders receives “Hero for Health” award in New Bedford; cited for Massachusetts pandemic response**

Marylou Sudders, who serves as Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services and has led the Commonwealth through its coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic as head of the state’s Response Command Center, was announced as Southcoast Health’s 2020-21 Hero for Health at St. Luke’s Hospital in New Bedford today.

Southcoast Health President and CEO Keith Hovan presented Sudders with the award, which was established to recognize leaders dedicated to public health causes.

“This year, more than ever, it feels special to be gathering and celebrating the principle that great health care requires not just great health systems, but strong civic and governmental leaders who truly understand the importance of safety and wellness in the communities we serve,” Hovan said during Tuesday’s ceremony.

Sudders joined Gov. Charlie Baker’s cabinet in 2015 with a background in mental health and social work. She is responsible for overseeing 12 agencies, including MassHealth, with a combined budget of \$24 billion – the largest budget in all of Massachusetts state government.

“Secretary Sudders has led our Commonwealth through this pandemic with a solution-focused approach driven by boldness, determination and resolve,” Hovan said. “She was instrumental in ensuring Southcoast Health had access to the tools to properly care for our region – among them, providing PPE and testing supplies in the early stages of the pandemic,

partnering with us to establish a field hospital at UMass Dartmouth and facilitating the distribution of life-saving vaccines.”

In accepting the Southcoast Hero for Health award, Sudders said that the Baker-Polito Administration has valued the collaboration of local officials and healthcare entities since the earliest days of the Commonwealth’s pandemic response – and continues to do so.

“With constantly shifting circumstances and new challenges arising throughout the pandemic, providers like Southcoast Health rose to the occasion,” Sudders said. “Today, almost 4.2 million residents are fully vaccinated; we would not be where we are today without the providers, frontline workers, nurses, clinical professionals and others across the Commonwealth who have been such strong advocates for their communities.”