January 11, 2016

Dr. Peter Slavin
President, Massachusetts General Hospital
55 Fruit Street
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Dr. Slavin:

I congratulate Massachusetts General Hospital on winning the Foster G. McGaw Award for Excellence in Community Service. I understand this award is much prized, recognizing as it does that the winner’s innovative programs significantly improve the health and well-being of the community it serves. The Baxter International Foundation, the American Hospital Association (AHA), and the Health Research & Educational Trust are to be commended also for creating such an award, now in its 30th year.

I am privileged to represent great teaching hospitals. They never fail to impress me, not only with their scientific and clinical excellence, but also with their concern for patients’ emotional and social well-being. This award honors Massachusetts General Hospital’s commitment to working with local communities to reduce health disparities and to empower them to overcome their toughest health challenges. The MGH is dedicated also to integrating community health into all its missions: patient care, teaching, and research.

I am especially proud of Massachusetts General Hospital’s longstanding community-based prevention work and its new clinical initiative dealing with substance use disorders. I hope these will prove transformative for individuals and for families and communities ravaged by these tragedies. The opioid epidemic presents a grave challenge to the Commonwealth and the nation and must be met with comprehensive and collaborative approaches. This award explicitly takes note of innovative community service initiatives, access to care through strong and resourceful teams of community health workers, navigators, home visitors, food security workers, and others. All work to reduce barriers to treatment and to encourage hope. Last year, I am told, the MGH Chelsea health center team assisted 3,525 patients in 23,888 encounters, from navigating the health care system, to housing, employment, school enrollment, food resources and much more.

I am grateful for everything Massachusetts General Hospital, and all associated with its prevention and treatment efforts, have done for our communities. The McGaw Award honors commitment to the health and wellness of the communities in which patients live and to which they will return after discharge. MGH understands that health cannot be sustained by care within its walls, however sound the science and however caring the staff. It wants healthy people to live in healthy communities, and its outstanding initiatives are fittingly rewarded with this prize.

Please give my thanks and my congratulations to everyone with whom you work.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress