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**COVID-19 MASSACHUSETTS UPDATES AND EXTENSIONS AS OF MARCH 25, 2020**

There are several guidance documents issued by the Baker administration yesterday attached to this update.

* Schools and non-emergency childcare centers in Massachusetts will now be closed until at least May 4th under a new executive order signed by Governor Baker on Wednesday, text to both are attached.
* The Commonwealth is partnering with WGBH and the broadcaster will air educational material from 12-5pm Mondays through Friday.
* Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeff Riley said his department plans to send additional guidance to school districts Thursday morning so that districts can "build upon or harmonize with their current remote learning plans" and implement their revised plans by early April.
* Massachusetts casinos will remain closed until at least April 7th as decided by the Gaming Commission.
* Governor Baker and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh are in a rare public rift over the issue of construction bans.   Governor Baker issued a guidance letter, attached, which allows for construction projects to continue statewide despite some local orders to halt them.  Mayor Walsh responded by extending his previously issued halt construction order indefinitely.  More to come on this developing issue.
* The MA DOR has yet to extend the state income tax filing deadline date past April 15th, despite the Federal Government already extending their deadline until July 15th and growing pressure on the state level.
* Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian (D-Melrose) took the oath of office today.
* Rep Mike Day (D-Stoneham), had become the first member of the Legislature to test positive for the coronavirus.  Mike is a good friend of many at OA and we wish him and his family good health.  We also hope he continues to post his daily quarantine updates on Facebook which are pure comic gold.
* Two members of Congress from Massachusetts announced separately Wednesday that they have been experiencing symptoms consistent with the novel coronavirus and have sought medical care.  Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-Boston) , sought treatment for flu-like symptoms, was tested for COVID-19, and is awaiting test results.  Earlier in the day**,** Representative Seth Moulton (D-Salem) said he has been experiencing symptoms and may miss votes in the House in the coming days. Pressley’s spokeswoman did not say whether the congresswoman expected to miss any upcoming votes.
* Grocery stores are among the essential businesses that remain open in Massachusetts, and DPH issued a public health guidance document, text is attached.
* Marijuana businesses are asking Governor Baker to reconsider his ruling that only patients registered in the state’s medical marijuana program will be able to legally buy marijuana for two weeks beginning today at noon.  Medical marijuana has been deemed an essential service, but unlike California and Illinois, legal marijuana sales for people not registered as patients must cease as of noon today in Massachusetts.
* We continue to monitor the impacts of the recently issued stay in place advisory on local industries and businesses.
* The House and Senate are scheduled to meet again in informal session on Thursday at 11am.
* The Senate is expected to take action on nurse staffing legislation which was released on Tuesday.
* The bill authorizes "independent practice authority" for nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives and psychiatric mental health clinical nurse specialists that are board certified and have completed at least two years of supervised practice.  The legislation also permits the Board of Registration in Nursing to reduce the two-year supervised practice requirement if the board deems that it is necessary to ensure adequate access to the professionals affected by the legislation.
* The legislation will likely emerge for a Senate vote later today but its chances in the House seem less clear as it is being opposed by House leadership.  More to come.
* Sessions will be live streamed.
* The Massachusetts Senate will hold a “tele-caucus” for all members this morning at 10am.
* Boston Mayor Marty Walsh issued an executive order allowing plastic bag use in Boston for retailers that qualify as essential businesses under state law.
* As of Wednesday night the state had 15 COVID-19 related deaths, there were 1,838 confirmed cases and  19,794 have been tested.